

**GENDER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF THE FISH
AGGREGATING DEVICE (FAD) IN TO'ABAITA, SOLOMON ISLANDS**

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to the young people of To'abaita in North Malaita, Solomon Islands

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ABSTRACT

Kastom or traditional societies are often portrayed as the root of gender inequalities. It is often argued that in order to create gender equality, there is a need to transform them from traditional to modern societies, a lineal transition that reflects the trajectories of modernization. Here, I argue that *kastom* and traditional societies are not necessarily the roots of gender inequality. Rather, gender inequality is a product of the process of change, including neoliberal economic development, which creates new and unequal gender expectations and relationships. This is a complex process of intersections between traditional and modern changes that have resulted in changes to mutual gender responsibilities that were characteristic of traditional societies. Here, I use the case of To'abaita society in Malaita in Solomon Islands to show how economic development projects create and perpetuate gender inequalities, and how traditional gender relations influence the processes and outcomes of economic development projects. The study shows that in the To'abaita society, there is no such word in the local dialect that is equivalent with the English word, 'gender.' In the To'abaita language, the terms *wane-wane ni bona'a* and *kini-kini ni bona'a* are used, which are actually a reference to someone's sex – male and female – rather than gender. When international organizations used economic development to change relationships between men and women it disrupts society and development is slow. However, when international organizations focus on empowering both men and women in their traditional roles and responsibilities, it gives them more power to pursue with other economic development aspirations to improve their lives. In this study I used *kastom* and traditional societies referring to the To'abaita society, especially how To'abaitans claimed themselves as being a man and woman in their own views and sensibilities, and in general how Solomon Islanders define their own society as dynamic, changing, functioning and surviving over time.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

“Kastom,” as it is used by Solomon Islanders, is not exactly the same as “traditional society” or “tradition.” Read David Akin (2013), *Colonialism, Maasina Rule, and the Origins of Malaita Kastom* <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/54347/akin.pdf>. *Kastom* and traditional societies are often portrayed as the root cause of gender inequality and women’s suppression. Here I argue that *kastom* and traditional societies are not necessary the root cause of gender inequality and women’s suppression. This case study shows that gender inequality and women’s suppression, as we know it today, are in fact the result of neoliberal economic developments that have engendered social changes that have led to the deterioration of gender relationships that were mutually supportive and have long sustained traditional societies.

This thesis examines how neoliberal economic development impacts gender relations. It also focuses on how gender relations influence economic development projects. It provides a broad overview discussion of gender and then focuses on the To’abaita region of the Malaita Province in Solomon Islands as case study. It discusses traditional gender relations and responsibilities in the To’abaita society and then uses a fisheries development project to examine how it impacts gender relations. The fieldwork was conducted in To’abaita between April and August 2018 and focused on how the installation of the Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) aimed at creating income-generating opportunities has influenced gender relationships and how traditional gender relations influence the processes and outcomes of economic development projects. The study employs qualitative research methodology involving semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. A total of 80 individuals were interviewed, including 40 males and 40 females. All of them were older than 20 years old.

This introductory chapter includes my positionality or self-reflection and motivations, justification for the study, thesis statement, research questions, and the outline of the thesis. First, the chapter provides my positionality or self-reflection on the personal experiences that inform my interest in this issue and which motivates me to do this research on gender and economic development. Second, it explains why this study is important to the scholarship on gender and economic development more generally, and more specifically to the significance of these issues in relation to Solomon Islands. Third, the chapter outlines the thesis statement and research

questions, which frame the nature and approach of this study. Fourth, it outlines the chapters of the thesis and a brief overview of what each chapter covers.

Self-Reflection and motivation

I grew up in a small village named Lathalu in the Northern tip of the island of Malaita, which is the main island in the Malaita Province in the Solomon Islands. Life was (and still is) challenging because of the region's remoteness from the major centers of economic development, high population density, which places pressures on land and marine resources, and vulnerability to climate changes and natural disasters. I started my formal education at a local kindergarten in Sulua and A'ama villages before continuing with my primary education in Mbita'ama and Malu'u Schools. Upon completing my primary education, I attended high school in these schools, Su'u, Anuke, and Arnon Atomea in Malaita province before going to King George VI School in Honiara, of Solomon Islands national capital. After completing high school, I was awarded a Solomon Islands Government scholarship to pursue undergraduate studies at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji from 2007 to 2009, where I obtained my Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Work Place Relations.

My first job was with a local non-government organization (NGO) known as the Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI). For six months in 2010 my job was to do research on literacy rates in Solomon Islands. After that, I was employed for two years by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a statutory body of the Solomon Islands Government that was tasked to investigate and report on the 1998–2003 ethnic tensions in Solomon Islands that left about 200 people killed, devastated the country's economy, and resulted in the deployment of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) (Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) 2012). In 2012, I joined the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society and participated in developing participatory action plans for six rural communities in the country with the aim to building resilient communities.

From 2014 to July 2016, I worked for an international fisheries and aquaculture research organisation called WorldFish as a community facilitator. I assisted with participatory action research, developing and revisiting community action plans around sustainable farming practices, community-based resource management, gender transformative approaches, strengthening partnership and participation within communities, between stakeholders and lead

farmers, capacity building trainings, work with the marginalized groups in the communities, team up with villagers as co-researchers, and co-authoring reports and journal papers (see Michelle Jane Rice et al. 2018; Cohen, Philippa J et al. 2016; van der Ploeg J et al. 2016; Douthwaite et al. 2012) with other team members.

My experience working with WorldFish along with my previous work with Solomon Islands Red Cross Society, Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI) was mostly about engaging with rural communities. These, not only built my capacity to work with rural communities, but it also helped me understand communities and rural life better, especially how economic projects implemented by international organizations are administered in these communities. It is during those years and in the course of my work experiences that I started to get involved in the discussion, meetings, workshops and programs on what was often referred to as “gender transformative approaches” aimed at facilitating gender-equitable practices in the communities. I was particularly interested in discussions and programs explored traditional cultures, gender roles, rural communities and economic development.

While working with rural communities, I noticed how women in rural areas in Solomon Islands are often marginalized in economic development projects. They rarely hold leadership positions in the communities. In meetings, women’s voices remain unheard compared to men. Women are often restricted to doing household chores while men are at the centre of discussions and decision-makers. Women’s participation in implementing economic development programs in villages are marginal, compared to men. Men are the focal contact persons and facilitators of economic development projects in the communities. Within the house men are considered the head, especially in leadership and decision-making. Women often do not have access to and control resources, assets, information, movement, networking, etc. Women and girls also suffer from gender-based violence (Asian Development Bank 2015). There are, for example, widespread reports in the conventional media and social media about rape cases, or women being murdered by their husbands (Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute <http://www.paclii.org/cgi>). These illustrate how women are marginalized, subordinated, and vulnerable.

It is often argued (Boutros Boutros-Ghali 1996) that in order to achieve gender equality and empower women, traditional societies and their kastoms need to be transformed. I argue however that changing kastom and traditional societies does not guarantee gender equality and women empowerment. It however intensifies existing gender inequalities and creates new unequal gender roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Justification of the study

Many people blame kastom or traditional ways of doing things as the root of gender inequalities (Gay 2009). They argue that in order to create gender equality, there is a need to transform traditional cultures to modern societies, a transition that reflects the trajectories of modernization (Boutros Boutros-Ghali 1996). This study examines how neoliberal economic development projects influence gender relations and how traditional gender relations influence the processes and outcomes of economic development projects. Often in the rural areas the issue of gender inequalities and women's suppression remains unattainable by the government although the leaders had ratified international agreements on gender equality and women empowerment (ADB 2015). Due to kastom, international organizations face difficulties with resistance from the community members, especially on efforts in trying to change traditional gender norms, roles, and expectations (Lawless et al. 2017). This research will help inform local governments and international organizations to understand the relationships between traditional gender relations and neoliberal economic development projects in the rural communities.

In Solomon Islands, it is important to understand the intersections between, kastom, gender roles and economic development especially in society where kastom still plays important role in people's daily lives. This interception between existing gender relations and economic development initiatives needs to be examined holistically in order to mitigate the negative consequences of the changing gender norms, roles, and expectations. Based on this study international organizations can instil knowledge and lessons to better inform their approaches in facilitating and implementing economic development projects in the rural communities. This study shows that when international organizations use economic development project to change relationships between men and women, development are slow and disruptive to society. However when international organizations used economic development project to empower both men and women in their traditional roles, it gives them even more power to have control over

their lives. This study is important for rural communities in Solomon Islands especially in areas of agriculture and fisheries, which are the mainstay of the rural communities.

While most studies of development and gender in Solomon Islands support the conventional argument that gender inequalities and women's suppression are rooted in kastom and are therefore need to be transform (Lawless et al. 2017; Gay 2009; Oxfam 2018; Rowland 2016). There is limited research on how economic development influences gender relations, particularly in the To'abaita region of Malaita and other rural areas in Solomon Islands. That is why the intersection between kastom and economic development needs to be examined and understood carefully in order to mitigate negative consequences of changes on both genders. Consequently, this study focuses on how the establishment of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) by international organizations have influenced gender relations in To'abaita. In other words, this research examines how a development project – FAD – reinforces or dismantles the structures that govern gender relations in rural communities in Solomon Islands. I choose FAD because it is new to most of the villages and is often perceived to be men's job. I am interested in examining how international organizations that establish FADs to address gender issues, especially the efforts to facilitate women's to participation.

This research is crucial not only for the To'abaita society but for the nation and international organizations working in Solomon Islands particularly on gender and economic development. While it is important to understand gender concepts broadly, it is significantly important as well to explore context-specific cases based on people's experiences within their own society (El-Bushra 2000). This research will help inform developmental organizations to be aware of the traditional gender norms, roles, and expectations that shape and influence economic development projects in the rural areas.

Thesis Statement

Kastom or traditional societies are often portrayed as the root of gender inequalities. Consequently, it is often argued that in order to create gender equality, there is a need to transform societies from traditional to modern societies, a lineal transition that reflects the trajectories of modernization. Here, I argue that kastom and traditional societies are not necessarily the roots of gender inequality. Rather, gender inequality is a product of the process of change which creates new and unequal gender expectations and relationships. This is a process

of complex intersections between traditional and modern changes that have resulted in the deterioration of mutually supportive gender responsibilities that were characteristic of traditional To'abaita society.

Research questions

1. How do economic development projects, and more specifically the deployment of fish aggregating devices (FADs), influence gender relations in Solomon Islands?
2. How do traditional gender relations influence the processes and outcomes of economic development project?

Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1

In chapter 1 it introduces the issue of research. It includes my positionality or self-reflection and motivation, justification for the study, thesis statement, research questions, and the outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 explains the methodology as to how the research is conducted in the Solomon Islands. It first describes semi-structured in-depth interviews as a qualitative research methodology. It then includes discussion on community identification, going to the Solomon Islands for the fieldwork research, recruitment of research participants that are interviewed for the study, interviewing, participant observation, data processing and analysis, study limitation and location, and conclusion. The chapter highlights that respect, honesty, humility and being able to integrate into the community and village life is fundamental to doing research in rural areas in Solomon Islands.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provides a background discussion on gender and economic development. It is divided into six (6) parts. Part 1, includes the distinction and links between the term 'sex' and 'gender'. Part 2 describes 'women in development' and 'gender and development' approaches.

Part 3 explains ‘social structures and institutions’. Part 4, explores ‘gender inequalities’. Part 5, provides some implications on gender and economic development, and finally part 6, conclusions.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 explores gender and economic development in Solomon Islands. The chapter first introduces Solomon Islands. It then provides an overview on: i) kastom; ii) women economic empowerment; iii) gender norms, roles, and expectations; iv) gender inequalities in Solomon Islands, and v) conclusions.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 entails gender and economic development in To’abaita. It is organized into these following sections; i) To’abaita, ii) the construction of gender in traditional To’abaita society, iii) household division of labour in traditional To’abaita society, iv) women and men’s taboos, v) changing nature of To’abaita society, vi) changing household division of labour in To’abaita, and vii) conclusion.

Chapter 6

The chapter illustrates how neoliberal economic development project influence gender relations in the rural areas of Solomon Islands. It examines how the deployment of a fish aggregating device (FAD) influences gender relations in To’abaita and how traditional gender relations influence the processes and outcomes of economic development projects. The chapter consists of the following sections; i) fish aggregating device, ii) fish aggregating devices in Solomon Islands, iii) fish aggregating device in To’abaita, iv) fish aggregating device deployment, v) positive and negative impacts of fish aggregating device, and vi) fish aggregating device and gender relations in To’abaita.

Chapter 7

This chapter concludes the thesis on how neoliberal economic development influence gender relations, and how traditional gender relations influence the processes and outcomes of economic development projects. The chapter divides into these following sections; i) lessons

from FAD in To'abaita; ii) implications for literature, and iii) recommendations based on the research.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Respect, honesty, humility and being able to integrate into the community and village life is fundamental to doing research in rural areas in Solomon Islands. This chapter explains how the research is conducted in the Solomon Islands. This includes; i) going to the Solomon Islands, ii) community and site selection, iii) establishing contacts with the communities, iv) recruitment procedure, v) conducting interviews in the rural communities, vi) participation and observation in the communities, vii) data processing and analysis, viii) limitation and location of the study, and ix) conclusion.

This research engages qualitative methodology using (i) semi-structured in-depth interviews, and (ii) participant observation. The purpose of qualitative research is to allow participants to express themselves based on their experiences and reality of their worldviews. As Seidman (2006) and Lofland et al. (2006) states, participant's lived stories and experiences are useful in qualitative research analysis. The research approach allows both men and women to speak for themselves.

Semi-Structured In-depth Interview

Doing research is a process that begins with curiosity and motivation. Seidman (2006) and Lofland et al. (2006) highlighted that research begins with motivation through our life experiences of the world we are part of. For example, an interview is conducted because we want to know about other people's stories and experiences (Seidman 2006; Lofland et al. 2006). Atkinson et al. (2001) states that interviewing involves making senses of what the interviewee is saying based on their social experiences. Charmaz (2014) also highlights that in intensive interviewing, the participant talks; the interviewer encourages, listens, and learns. Central to qualitative interview is the fact that it is not about what researchers think. Rather, it is about people's experience and their views of the world around them (Seidman 2006). Seidman (2006: 9) says that, "[t]he purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to "evaluate" as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience." I found interviewing, as a method, to be relevant and useful,

especially in the rural areas where talk-story is part of people's everyday life. Interviewing as a process however is different from everyday conversations, talk-stories or informal conversations because in interviewing the interviewer comes up with a topic of discussion and wants people to contribute to that discussion, whereas talk-story or informal conversations people talked about everything. They tell stories, make jokes, laugh and express themselves in different ways.

Seidman (2006:12) indicates that;

Interviewing research takes a great deal of time and, sometimes, money. The researcher has to conceptualize the project, establish access and make contact with participants, interview them, transcribe the data, and then work with the material and share what he or she has learned... Any method of inquiry worth anything takes time, thoughtfulness, energy, and money. But interviewing is especially labor intensive. If the researcher does not have the money or the support to hire secretarial help to transcribe tapes, it is his or her labor that is at stake."

Going to the Solomon Islands

I came to Hawaii in August 2016 to pursue graduate studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. In April 2018 I went back to the Solomon Islands to carry out my fieldwork research in north Malaita where I am from. I was taken to the Honolulu International Airport by a friend from the Hale Manoa, East-West Center residence hall. At the airport I checked in and waited for my flight on Fiji Airways. Its about 5 hours flight from Honolulu to Samoa. From Samoa, the flight took about 1 hour 30 minutes to Nadi in Fiji. In Nadi, I met other Solomon Islanders waiting for the flight to the Solomon Islands. Some of them were my previous work colleagues and others were my school mates at the University of the South Pacific. It was another 3 hours flight to the Solomon Islands from Fiji. Arriving in Solomon Islands, I was excited to meet my relatives who were waiting for me at the airport. It is normal for relatives to ask about life overseas since many of them had never left Solomon Islands, and much less to Hawai'i. I told them about my experience in Hawai'i and the purpose of my visit. I spent a week in Honiara with family members and visited the office of WorldFish, an international research organization that operates in Asia, Africa and the Pacific including Solomon Islands to harnesses the potential of fisheries and aquaculture to reduce hunger and poverty. Since I had worked with WorldFish prior to coming to Hawai'i, the organization agreed to facilitate my travels and research in the communities in north Malaita. My proposed study on FADs and gender was in line with a FAD project that was implemented by WorldFish and the Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) in the Solomon Islands.

After a week in Honiara, I boarded a passenger boat for the five-hour trip to Auki, the provincial capital of Malaita. There I got in a public vehicle (pick-up truck) and went on another four-hour trip to To'abaita in north Malaita where my parents live. The road condition was extremely bad with lots of potholes filled with rain water and mud, making it a rough and bumpy ride. In north Malaita I spend another one week with my parents and other siblings.

While at home, I talked to the village leaders and members of other communities about my fieldwork. It is obvious in To'abaita that almost everyone is related to each other. As an insider and part of these communities, I knew the people and culture well. Regardless of being an insider, it was also challenging, especially in trying to stay focus and committed on the research without being interrupted by family and community members and other activities such as marriage, funeral, church anniversaries, and so forth.

After a week in the village with my parents, I went back to the WorldFish Office in Auki to talk with them about my fieldwork. I also met with the officer from the MFMR in Auki, who worked closely with WorldFish on the FADs projects. I also met with representatives and leaders of OKRONUS (a community-based organization aimed at improving resource management in the local communities). The name OKRONUS is an acronym for six participating villages (Oibola, Kona, Radefasu, Oneoneabu, Ura, and Sita). These comprise of both the Kwara'e and Langalanga people in Malaita (see Sukulu et al.2016). I joined this collaboration team (WorldFish, MFMR, and OKRONUS) to the communities and participate in the FADs deployments.

Community and site selection

The research is conducted at four localities and communities in To'abaita: i) Malu'u; ii) Afufu; iii) Mbita'ama, and iv) Fo'ondo. I spent at least 2-3 weeks of fieldwork in each of the communities. In each community I interviewed 10 women and 10 men, ages 20 years and older. The majority of interviewees are 30 to 65 years older, with least interviewees below 30s (20 to 29 years old) and above 65 (66 to 80 years of age). A total of 80 participants (40 men and 40 women) were interviewed during the course of the research. It is a wonderful experience. Although I was an insider, I learned a lot from conducting the research in rural communities. The communities were located along the coastal areas in To'abaita. They were mostly artisanal fishers and subsistence farmers. These communities were well known for having used FADs for

fishing since they were first established in the 1990s, especially in Malu'u, Afufu, Mbita'ma and Foondo in the To'abaita region. Recently WorldFish and the Provincial Fisheries Office (PFO), Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) had deployed eight FADs collaboratively around the island of Malaita. These are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Current FADs initiated by WorldFish and Provincial Fishery Office in Malaita

#	FAD Name	Region	Deploy Maintain By Name	Deploy Date	Comment
1	Adaitolo	Suava	WorldFish & PFO	6 April 2018	Fishers enjoyed fishing at the FAD
2	Onepusu/Afufu	To'abaita	WorldFish & PFO	9 April 2018	Lost in Aug 2018
3	Mandalua	West Mbaelelea	WorldFish & PFO	11 April 2018	New FAD
4	Gwaunatafu	West Fataleka	WorldFish & PFO	12 April 2018	New FAD
5	Fote	West Kwara'ae	WorldFish & PFO	16 April 2018	New FAD
6	Bio	West Kwara'ae	WorldFish & PFO	18 April 2018	New FAD
7	Ambitona	East Kwaio	WorldFish & PFO	25 April 2018	New FAD
8	Ta'arutona	West Are'Are	WorldFish & PFO	21 April 2018	New FAD

In the 1990s Japanese Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF) had deployed more than 30 FADs mostly in the northern region of Malaita, including To'abaita. After OFCF project ceased, most FADs also deteriorated and no longer functional, except for a few that still exist and have been maintained by the fishermen, especially in Mbita'ma and Suidara and Afufu communities in To'abaita. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) also helped deploy numerous FADs around Malaita and Solomon Islands. Table 2 indicates some of the communities in To'abaita with FAD experiences in the past and today.

Table 2: The communities in To'abaita where this research was done

#	FAD Name	Region	Deploy Maintain By Name	Deploy Date	Comment
1	Malu'u	To'abaita	OFCF	1994	The FAD is broken by a passing vessel

2	Malu'u	To'abaita	Community artisanal fishers	2009	After 3 years the FAD is broken/lost
3	Afufu/Suidara	To'abaita	Community artisanal fishers	2009	Fishermen still maintain the FAD
4	Onepusu/Afufu	To'abaita	WorldFish & PFO	9 April 2018	The FAD is lost due to strong current
5	Mbita'ama	To'abaita	OFCF	1994	The FAD is lost in a bad weather
6	Mbita'ama	To'abaita	MFMR	12 July 2015	The FAD is lost in a bad weather
7	Mbita'ama	To'abaita	Community artisanal fishers	2003	The FAD is still maintained by fishers
8	Fo'ondo	To'abaita	MFMR	26 Sept 2017	FAD aggregates more fish

The research is conducted in Malu'u, Afufu, Mbita'ama, and Foondo in To'abaita. The region was the first to undergo FADs fishing projects since 1994.

Established contacts

First I contacted the WorldFish office in Auki and Honiara about my research interest. From that time, I was informed by WorldFish to do a research within their ongoing projects, which was relevant to my topic on gender and FADs in Malaita. My research topic was therefore formulated along with a project that was being implemented at the time of research by WorldFish, the organization where I previous worked. The WorldFish project was called, “Strengthening community-based natural resource management to safeguard food security in Malaita Province”. As part of this project, WorldFish deployed eight FADs in eight communities around Malaita as outlined in Table 1. When I visited the WorldFish office in Honiara and Auki, I was briefed on the progress of the FADs program in Malaita. I then teamed-up with WorldFish, MFMR and OKRONUS to go into some of the communities to deploy the FADs and provide awareness about community-based resource management and facilitate community marine managed areas. During these visits I talked with the community leaders and members. Since I am from To'abaita, I knew most of the community leaders and members. In fact, most of us in To'abaita were related to each other either as members of the same tribe, or through intermarriages, kastom and language. These existing relationships have helped strengthened my contacts with the community members, with the help of the collaborative team (WorldFish, MFMR, and OKRONUS).

Recruitment of participants

I used purposive and snow ball sampling to recruit participants for this study. It is purposive because I interviewed people who were willing to participate in the study. For example, some of the community members voluntarily came forward to be interviewed after I told them about my research, especially when I joined WorldFish and MFMR in the communities. For snow ball, I recruited participants who were recommended by other interviewees. Often the first interviewee would help me identify the next potential interviewees and in most cases they led me to their homes or brought the interviewees to me. Besides that, being able to liaise with WorldFish and MFMR helped a lot with the recruitment of interviewees. For example, when I accompanied the WorldFish and MFMR team, during welcome and introductory sessions in the communities, I was given time to talk about my research. I explained the purpose of the research and invited them to participate in the study. I also asked village leaders to recommend potentially appropriate interviewees and they have been very helpful. The recruitment process worked perfectly for communities in To'abaita with the help of WorldFish and MFMR, community leaders and interviewees.

Conducting Interviews

One Saturday afternoon I planned to spend the weekend with an old man and his wife at their home and to interview them. I set out around 4:00pm, aiming to reach their home by 5:00pm. As I walked along the main road that runs the island, I heard loud music coming from the side of the road. I tried to figure out what was going on. As I approached where the music was coming from, I saw four men dancing to the music. I realized that they were drunk. I walked quickly past them pretending not to see them. However, one of them called my name. He persuaded me to sit with them for a while. I stopped and sat down with them. They had been drinking *Kwaso* (distilled home brew) since the previous night. They kept repeating the same conversation over and over again. The music was loud. Suddenly, the music stopped. The problem was with the battery. One of the men shouted to his children, two of whom came running. Their father told them to go to a friend's house and ask if he could borrow his battery. I was looking for an opportunity to escape. I saw an empty plastic bottle. I told them that I was going to fetch water and would return. I left them, followed another road that led to the main road where they could not see me. By the time I reached the elderly couple, it was already dark. The two were preparing dinner. I sat down around the fire place and hold inside my bag for some

biscuits and sugar I brought with me, then I asked if there is anything I can do, so I scraped two dried coconut fruits to make taro soup. The house was filled with smoke from the fire, which make my eye goes watery. I spent the night with them. We had dinner and then talked story late into the night. The old man and I slept around the fire place with the fire continue burning the whole night warming our feet, while the woman slept inside her room. Early morning, it was still dark, I heard the two got up and pray, and then started preparing breakfast. We had breakfast with sweet potatoes and cabbage. After breakfast, the two old couple said a word of prayer with me before I went back home. What a lovely experience. It is not just interviewing but appreciating the life, knowledge and everything they offered and being able to face life in the villages.

To conduct research in the rural areas means one has to adapt to the village life. I know the people and culture well; I know what it means to be a village life. I do not want to distance myself from them in the name of doing research. I get my hands and clothes dirty with them and live a village life. There are forty percent (40%) of interviewees I interviewed them outside their homes and 60% of the total participants were interviewed inside their homes. The interview begin with an opening statement stating the purpose of the study, why it is important, including participants' rights to participate and to withdraw at any time, participants' right to privacy and confidentiality. These are stated in the participants' consent form. Before going into the interview questions, participants were given time to ask questions regarding the interview. Almost all participants when asked if they had any questions before interviewing them, their only responds are "*Le'a bana. E ha'i bo'o tesi do kwai sore'a*" (it is okay. I had nothing to say).

It is good practice in the rural communities that interviews will take place at the participants' home. However, it did not always work as expected. Interviews can be done anywhere depending on the participant's willingness to participate and when and where they are available. During the course of the research most women preferred to be interviewed while their husbands were at home or in places where everyone could see both the researcher and the interviewee. As a male, insider and a researcher I always informed the husband of the woman before I could interview her. Men on the other hand can be interviewed anywhere at any time depending on their availability compared to women.

The interviews took at least 20 – 80 minutes for most interviews; however it depended on the interviewees' responses and discussions. Some participants did not talk a lot, especially for women. Men on the other hand talked a lot during the interviews. Some of them it took an hour or more of interviews. Flexibility while doing interviews is important in the rural areas. It is important also to understand the interviewees, example betel nut chewers and smokers could not stay long with interviews if they did not smoke and chew betel nuts. It is culturally right in To'abaita when someone did good things for you, in your heart you always want to give something back. The same principle applies. I would chew betel nut with them, and have them smoke during the interviews. Others we drink tea and eat together and continue to do the interviews with them in the village.

The interview questions are semi-structured and open ended or in-depth interviews that allow participants to share their experiences openly. The first questions are meant to stimulate participants to talk freely about their own life experiences. These opening questions are about the participant's life history. It was very interesting as participants begin to share their experiences and live stories expressing what they have been through in their lives. Most talked about their early childhood days, education journey, work history, marriage experiences, and everyday life within their families.

After participants told their life histories and stories, leading questions on gender and FADs were asked such as 'Did you know of any FADs program in your community? Did you participate in any way in the FAD program in your community? Are you happy about the FADs in your community? Who owns these FADs? How is FAD affecting you, your family and community? What are the negative and positive impact of FADs in your life, family, and community? All the interviews were done in the To'abaita dialect and are tape recorded.

It is important for an insider to communicate with the people using the local dialect of that place an indication he/she belongs to that place, part of the culture, people and society. Interviews conducted in the To'abaita dialect allows individuals to talk out freely overcoming the barrier of seeing the researcher as an outsider. "Close friendship and personal involvement in activities such as visiting them in their own homes, laughing with them, eating and sleeping with

them, makes the interaction between the researched and the researcher free flowing and without threat.” (Alice Pollard 1997:12)

Participant Observation

Davis and Craven (2016:85) stated that “participant observation is often considered the mainstay of cultural anthropology, but is also commonly used in sociology, communication studies, social psychology, religious studies, and human geography, among other disciplines.” Some critics however have argued that participant observation is merely an “awareness” of things around us, but participant observation is more than just mere “awareness” of things. Participant observation however, seeks detailed, recorded observations and reflection of the researcher’s participation with the people and the environment in ways that allow for collection of data for analysis (Davis and Craven 2016). Atkinson et al (2001: 352) affirmed that “participant observation involves not only gaining access to and immersing oneself in new social worlds, but also producing written accounts and descriptions that bring versions of these worlds to others.”

This method is useful not only to record the things around us but it helps us understand certain aspects of people’s lives and social interactions within the environment people are part of. In doing participant observation, it helps support certain aspects covered and not covered in the interviews. During the course of my research I participated in the deployment of some of these FADs in some of the communities around Malaita. I also participated in some of the activities in the communities such as church anniversaries, funerals, marriages, and meetings.

I participated and took note of important aspects of the community relevant to my research, example what people do, say, and how they engaged with their daily activities in the villages, families and communities, compared to when an outside institution/funders/organizations are presented in their communities.

Here is an example: Christina is a village woman. She worked in her garden every day to support her family. Her husband is a fisherman; he fished every day to support his family. Around 4am Christina’s husband would leave home to fishing at the FAD. After preparing breakfast, she sent their children to school, she feed the pigs, and takes care of the household activities from washing, fetching water, and cleaning. Around 10 am her husband arrived back

from fishing. She took the fish to the water, cleaned them and gives her husband's food (breakfast). She would allocate fish for sale and for family consumption. She then sells the fish in the morning or bakes them in traditional oven for sales at the local markets. After being done with these works at home, she goes to the garden. She would spend the remaining part of the day until late afternoon. Her husband went out fishing again until sun set. At home Christina does the cooking, and takes cares of the household activities, prepare dinner for their children, feed the pigs, cleaning and washing the dishes. Her husband would arrive back home around 7pm. She gave her husband's food (dinner), clean and prepare the fish, and decided on either marketing the catch that evening or baking them for sale. By the time Christina went to bed it would be around 10pm during the night.

This is different during the presence of an outside institution/funder/organization. It changes both Christina and her husband's roles within their family. Christina would wake and take care of the household activities, prepare breakfast, feed the pig, send their children to school, while her husband spend time with the officers and people who supported them with the project in this case FAD. Christina and other women were instructed by other men including Christina's husband to prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner for the officers. It is observed that women are within the kitchen while men are at the frontline in doing the planning, talking, and working with international organizations. This is obvious during the course of this study in To'abaita.

To me participant observation is part of my everyday life in the villages with the community members interacting and participating in small talks from saying good morning, hand shake, chewing betel nut, drinking tea and eating together, and participating in community events involving deaths, marriages, church anniversaries, feasts and so forth.

Data processing and analysis

Data processing begins with arranging the field notes and recorded interviews with code names and date of interviews and note taking. Based on the research questions and literatures, emerging themes and sub-themes are developed during the process of listening, transcribing, and written scripts of interviews and field notes. These themes are organized into categories and sections under each chapter. Under each theme, it is backed up with participant's views, experiences, and stories emerged during the course of the field work. I allowed the data to tell the story.

Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses are used. The qualitative data analysis involved organization of the scripts and field notes into categories and texts with interview quotes and experiences, and quantitative data analysis convey numerical data analysis, especially the use of percentage to support the qualitative information which set the basis of the research study.

Limitation

Rural life is always challenging due to lack of proper infrastructures, geographically isolated, and vulnerability to climate change impacts including changing weather patterns and unforeseen circumstances like deaths for example. To reach the rural villages, one has to travel 4-6 hours by boat with expectation of rough seas, heavy rain, and strong winds. From the boat one catches the public vehicle and travel for another 4-6 hours on rough roads with expectations to face pot holes, and bumpy roads. Travelling in these public vehicles is uncomfortable and sometimes risky, if it rains, and people are travelling during the night which is the usual routine, it is hard life traveling to the rural villages. There are no public toilets or rest rooms along the way for travelling passengers to use. In some villages after you drop off from the public vehicle, you will have to take another hour by foot in order to reach home. Travelling to most rural villages in the Solomon Islands is not relaxing.

Staying in the village is different from staying in town or in the United States; you are not expected to sleep on mattresses or on comfortable bedding. Most villages live without electricity even they have some access to solar lights today. Internet connectivity is still lacking, and most of the time you stayed disconnected from what is happening around the world or in other parts of the country. Accept what is set on the table for breakfast and dinner, lunch is not culturally practiced in the villages, however people eat whatever food they came across during the day or even at night. During the day the village is empty as family members went out gardening, fishing or marketing. It takes sometimes for one to adapt to the village life and settle down in order to fully stay focus on doing research in the rural areas or villages.

Regardless of the many challenges face in the villages, the people still value cultural practices and values of helping one another when need arises. During marriages, deaths, church anniversaries, and other important ceremonies families, relatives, and friends contributes cash, traditional shell money, pigs, and foods of all kinds to the event or the host family and tribe.

Going to the village life means partaking in these events. When someone died, you have to respect their family and people, and stay away from doing your work and be part of the community and family. During marriages, even you don't have anything to contribute, just be part of them, go with them, work with them, and be part of the community. At home when someone came, you have to come out from the house and spent time with them. There is no time for you to be alone in the villages, especially if you are known as an insider going to study somewhere. It becomes difficult for you as a researcher to stay away from them. The only thing is to be part of them and do the research. This means transcribing and writing has to be wait until I get back to school in Hawai'i.

The study location

Figure 1: The study is conducted at the northern tip of Malaita Island in To'obaita in the Solomon Islands. The map shows FADs sites deployed by WorldFish and Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in 2018



WorldFish 2018

Conclusion

As an insider I participate in marriages, church anniversaries, funerals, and feasts in the communities during my research. To remain isolated and committed with the research is near impossible in the rural areas, especially for an insider. In the rural areas interviews are not always done at home as expected, it can be done during a communal gathering, or anywhere in the garden, under a tree, around the fire place in the kitchen, and so forth. Telling stories, jokes,

chewing betel nut, eating and drinking tea together with the people, and being welcoming has played very important role in getting people comfortable with the researched and the researcher. Respect, honesty, being humble and be able to integrate into the community and village life is fundamentally important for doing research in the rural areas in Solomon Islands.

The next chapter was about gender and economic development. It includes key concepts of 'women in development and 'gender and development' approaches.

CHAPTER 3. GENDER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This chapter provides a background discussion on gender and economic development. Gender has become an important aspect of the discussions about and implementation of economic development project, both in developed countries, as well as in developing countries around the world. Governments, Nongovernment organizations, development agencies and international inter-governmental organizations have insisted on the inclusion of gender in the planning and implementation of economic development projects.

This chapter is divided into six (6) parts. Part 1, includes the distinction and links between the term ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. Part 2 describes ‘women in development’ and ‘gender and development’ approaches. Part 3, describes ‘social structures and institutions’ in relation to gender. Part 4, explores ‘gender inequalities’. Part 5, provides some implications on gender and economic development based on the literatures. Finally, part 6, concludes the chapter.

Understanding gender

The push for economic development can challenge the very basis of society which is the family. It affects the household division of labour, altering traditional gender norms, roles, and expectations leading to complex of gender disparities. Gender and gender inequalities are therefore creations of contemporary society (Momsen 2004).

However, there is no society that is immune to changes. Society does changes over time. Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1996:73) state that, “No true social transformation can occur until every society learns to adopt new values, forging relationships between men and women based on equality, equal responsibility and mutual respect.”

The terms ‘women in development’, ‘gender and development’, ‘women empowerment’, ‘women’s right’ and ‘gender equality’ were first introduced in the North before it reached the South. North created the agenda while countries in the South followed. It was first popular amongst national and international organizations. Later governments in the South include these agendas in their development strategies when seeking for assistance. These agenda sets a road map for development in the South. Ideas of gender inclusiveness was later spread out to the rural communities by non-government organisations (NGOs) influencing community based groups,

and the village people to recognize and include gender in economic developments (Momsen 2004).

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Globally, there are vast differences in work, literacy, and leadership between genders. There are majority of women in the informal sector and with low paid jobs compared to their male partners. Women’s participation in national institutions such as parliament has declined over the years. However, in developing countries, gender equality has not been sufficient achieved especially in the areas of politics, law, in positions and leadership of local, national and international institutions. Globally, gender gap between men and women aged 15 and above widened as more men became literate compared to women. In Latin America and the Caribbean, despite the fact that women have higher literacy rate, their participation in the formal sector was comparatively lower. Eastern European countries were said to have greater gender equality. This, however, declined over the years (ibid). A UN Women report (2015) revealed that woman’s leadership and political participation in the Asia Pacific region remained marginal, and gender inequalities in labour force participation remains high and has prevented women from taking advantage of the opportunities created by economic growth.

Gender and gender inequality have become widely accepted as an important factor in economic development planning and interventions nowadays (El-Bushra 2000). However, the concept of gender used in economic developments is still confusing to many people and are often resisted by male dominated patriarchal societies and institutions. Judy El-Bushra (2000:55) argues that, “[p]eople are confused about the concept of gender as used in development planning

and practice and male-dominated institutions are still resistant to it. This is threatening the achievement of women's rights and equality and the transformation of gender relations.”

El-Bushra (2000:60) further states that, “Men' and 'women', 'male' and 'female', 'sex' and 'gender' are all words surrounded by controversy and are subject to complex and different interpretations.” The word ‘gender’ is often used interchangeably with the word ‘sex.’ However, ‘gender’ is socially constructed while ‘sex’ is biologically determined (Momsen 2004). This separation according to El-Bushra (2000:58) was first spelled out in 1972 by Ann Oakley as,

Sex is a biological term: 'gender' a psychological and cultural one. Common sense suggests that they are merely two ways of looking at the same division and that someone who belongs to, say, the female sex will automatically belong to the corresponding (feminine) gender. In reality this is not so. To be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, is as much a function of dress, gesture, occupation, social network and personality, as it is of possessing a particular set of genitals (Oakley 1972: 158).

Similarly, Lawless et al. (2017) describes gender with regards to social expectations and relationships of being a male and female. These expectations and relationships are governed by gender norms in society. Lawless et al. (2017: 40) state,

Gender refers to the social expectations and opportunities associated with being female or male, and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys. These gender “norms” shape what society expects of a “good woman,” or a “good man.” For example, these expectations may influence what women or men should say (or not say), do or not do, where they should go or not go. Gender norms and relations also shape what happens when women or men do not conform to these expectations and may include ridicule from neighbors, punishment or even violence. These gender expectations and relations vary between cultures, and they change over time.

Gender as a word itself however has different layers of meaning. People interpret the word gender differently and in most languages the word gender does not exist. The need for gender awareness for non-gender specialists or those who lack understanding on gender is becoming the goal of most development organizations (El-Bushra 2000). Gender scholar Judy El-Bushra (2000:56) states that,

Unsurprisingly, different individuals and agencies differ radically in the way they interpret the concept of 'gender' in their work, each one asserting that their interpretation is correct. The word itself was used originally in linguistics. It has grown up within a European, and specifically English, tradition. It is now used in several different disciplines (including linguistics, anthropology, and, more recently, cultural studies, development studies and feminism), and its use in each of these has contributed layers of

meanings. It is a word which is used in many different senses: to analyse social relations, to describe aspects of people's lives or in judgements about the value of social change. Being a highly specialised word, it is poorly understood by the average English-speaker, and few words exist for it in other languages.

Women in Development and Gender and Development Framework

The work of scholars like Boserup (1970), Tinker (1982), Maguire (1984), Oakley (1972), Rubin (1975), Moser (1993), Razavi and Millar (1995) and others have indicated that there have been considerable shifts in early approaches, from 'Women in Development' to 'Gender and Development' approaches. 'Women in Development' approaches pay particular attention on women especially in demanding equal opportunities for women in education, health, and employment opportunities. The term was first coined in the 1970s by a network of women professionals known as Women's Committee of the Washington DC Chapter of the Society for International Development who were influenced by the work of Ester Boserup on Third World developments (Boserup 1970).

'Women in Development' approaches set the basis for organizational, agencies, institutions, NGOs, and women's ministries in many countries (Momsen 2004). The approach was strongly supported and promoted by 'Women in Development' office of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 'Women in Development' approaches focused exclusively on women and their roles on economic development. The aim is to get women engaged in economic development through income generating projects as a means to empower women (ibid).

Recently, there is a considerable shift in approaches from focusing on women in isolation to 'Gender and Development' approaches. 'Gender and Development' (GAD) approaches moved from focusing on sex (biologically determined) to gender (socially constructed) or the relationship between men and women in economic development. GAD focuses on how economic development influences gender power relations and social structures including class, age, marital status, religion and ethnicity or race differences (Momsen 2014) (also see Oakley 1972 and Rubin 1975). As Whitehead (1979) explains,

The focus on gender rather than women makes it critical to look not only at the category 'women'—since that is only half the story—but at women in relation to men, and the way in which relations between these categories are socially constructed. Men and women play different roles in society, with their gender differences shaped by ideological,

historical, religious, ethnic, economic and cultural determinants (as quoted in Moser 1993:3).

In practice most outside institutions, organizations, development agencies, and government programs and projects both national and international are framed on these approaches promoting women empowerment and gender equality (El-Bushra 2000; Moser 1993). It is believed that the empowerment of women through micro-business initiatives, savings clubs, micro-credit schemes etc., helps narrow the gender gap in economic development while at the same time improve and increased production (Kabeer 2016; Moser 1993; Mosse 1993; Sanyal 2009; Weeratunge et al. 2012). This is proved to be true by Kabeer and Natali (2016:259) who state that, “[g]ender equality contributed positively to economic growth to be fairly robust, holding across a range of different countries, time periods, and model specifications. The evidence for the reverse relationship was less consistent and generally confined to high-income countries” (Kabeer 2016:295).

In 2000, the beginning of the new millennium, eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was established by world leaders at the United Nations to fight world poverty. One of the goals is to promote gender equality and women empowerment (MDG 3). These goals set the basis for local governments and organizations, national and international agencies and donors to design development projects and initiatives targeting these MDGs (MDGs Report 2015). Gender equality and women empowerment were integrated into these Millennium Development Goals. After 15 years of the MDGs are lapsed in 2015, significant results were seen especially in education. However, it did not end world poverty (MDGs 2015). Now, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) carried on from the MDGs for another 15 years until 2030. The SDGs aimed for sustainable development including eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, tackle climate change, fighting inequality and so forth. There are 17 SDGs. Gender equality is one of them. Recently, the 2017 UN 61st Commission meeting on the status of women,

...reiterates that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and women’s full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital to achieve sustainable development, promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies, enhance sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productivity, end poverty in all its forms everywhere and ensure the wellbeing of all (UN Women 2017).

However, women empowerment approaches in economic development have been criticized for using women as a means to secure organizational funding and for neglecting men. Sylvia Chant (2008) said that Smart economics or Women in Development (WID) approaches use women and girls as savior to save the world. However, there is no doubt that WID approaches do contribute significantly to women empowerment and in closing gender gap in economic development (see Kabeer 2016 also see Kabeer and Luisa 2013 ‘the right thing to do’). Meinzen et al (2011a: 4-5) confirms that, “increasing women’s access to assets and narrowing the gender-asset gap would directly improve women’s wellbeing by reducing their vulnerability and enhancing their health, self-esteem, and sense of control ...leading to a range of positive outcome within the family and community.” For examples on this, see Cole et al. (2014).

Sanyal (2009) affirms that female’s marginalization from access to and control of resources, assets, finance, mobility, networking, information, and other opportunities remains a challenge to economic development. Judy El-Bushra (2000: 56-57) revealed that most development organizations and outside institutions think that the most effective way to address gender inequality is through women’s economic empowerment. This however does not address the roots of gender inequalities. She suggests that gender transformative approaches in economic development should be employed and comments that,

Many development agencies adopt women's economic empowerment as their main strategy for achieving gender equity, assuming that it will lead automatically to gender equality. Yet women throughout the world describe their experience of discrimination in many other areas of life, including their political roles, which define their power to control resources within social relationships, and their need for both emotional security and reproductive rights within interpersonal relationships (El-Bushra 2000: 56-57).

She asserts that transformative approaches in economic development means social structures and institutions that governs gender in society need to be transformed and unpacked in order to bring about gender equitable practices in place. She proposes that,

Institutions need to be 'unpacked', so that we can understand how they function in terms of rules, resources, people, activities and power structures. A key part of this understanding is that institutions are not monolithic structures: they are constantly being re-created, through the struggles of women and men to define their own ideas of equality and empowerment and create a viable and satisfying life for themselves in the context of - or in spite of - their social identities (El-Bushra 2000:61).

Social Structures and Institutions

Social institutions shape our understanding of the world. It is governed by rules, norms, and regulations which influence the way people interact in their everyday life. These institutions are part of the larger societal structures which govern human society including gender norms, roles, and expectations in the family, community, and national level. According to Mosse (1993:49), “social institutions that we enter as individuals, from our arrivals in our families at birth, through our education, youth culture, and into the worlds of work and leisure, marriage and starting families of our own, give us clear messages about how normal people behave, according to their gender.”

The individual behaviors and actions in society are governed by the social structures and institutional rules, norms, values and conventions. These are in signed agreements, established policies, operational and institutional rules written or unwritten. Kabeer (2003:47) describe social institution as,

The ‘rules of the game’ in society. These rules maybe written or unwritten, explicit or implicit, codified in law, mandated by policy, sanctified by religion, upheld by convention or embodied in the standard of family, community or society. They play a powerful role in shaping human behavior, in terms of both what is permitted and what is prohibited. In the economy they influence the gender division of labour between production and reproduction in different parts of the world; and give rise to distinctive regional patterns in labour force participation and economic activity by women and men.

Sociologist Emile Durkheim described society as an organism made up of different organs called institutions working together for the functioning of the society. These institutions are the family and community one belongs, religion, cultural beliefs and traditions, education/schools, government and bureaucracies, law/legal systems, businesses/economic activities, media, hospital, and so forth that individuals are part of in their everyday life (Calhoun et al.2012). Example, family and community are closely related areas where gender norms, roles and expectations are inscribed and internalized by the society members. Within the family and community, the relationship between men and women and boys and girls are governed and shaped by family and community expectations based on gender (socially constructed feminine and masculine characteristics). These gender norms are then transferred and practiced within the wider society. Kabeer (2003) says that from the family, the wider society constructs these differences creating gender inequalities beyond homes.

It is agreed that individuals first encounter gender within the family from birth before entering into other spheres of society outside the family. The family therefore is the backbone of gendered norms, roles and responsibilities. The relationships within the family are intimate bringing a sense of belonging based on blood ties, marriages or kinship. Even members are employed outside the homes, within the family; Kabeer (2003:50) says that, “to be husband, wife, brother or daughter is to be a male or female.” Everything starts within the family, to be a man and woman starts inside the family. Kabeer (2003:51) also says that, “ideas and beliefs about gender in the domestic sphere often get reproduced in other social relations, either consciously as gender discrimination or unconsciously as gender bias.” However, according to institutional frame work, not every family is the same; therefore gender roles, norms, and expectations vary across cultures and societies around the world. According to systematic analysis of gender, the nature of gender inequalities around the world is a reflection of how institutions are structured differently in different countries and regions with the changing societies (Kabeer 2003).

Challenging gender is hard since, gender is not a single issue on its own. Gender and gender inequalities are woven into complex of inequalities created by processes of changes leading to contemporary societies or modernity. Projects and programs that aimed for poverty eradication become subjected to these complexes of inequalities including gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, and citizenship. Challenging gender means challenging other forms of inequalities and social structures and institutions that creates these inequalities (Kabeer 2016; Bushra 2000).

Understanding gender and economic development is important in project implementations for sustainable development mentioned by Kabeer and Natali (2013) (also see MDGs Report 2015). As stated by Beneria, Berik and Floro (2015:3), “individual choices don’t tell the whole story. Forms of collective identity and action based on gender, race/ethnicity, class, citizenship, and sexuality also shapes economic outcomes.” A World Bank Report for 2012 termed gender equality as “smart economics”, because it can improve governance, productivity, and development outcomes. However, ‘smart economics’ approaches failed to address the underlying structural inequalities that shape the lives of individuals in society (Coles et al. 2015). Gender and gender inequality therefore is a structural issue that is beyond individual

intention. It is embedded in social institutions that one enters, not only within the family, but beyond (Kabeer 2003; Mosse 1993).

Gender Inequalities

Mosse (1993:48) states that, “for all societies the common denominator of gender is female subordination, mediated by class and race” (also see Momsen 2004). Gender and gender inequality is complex. It is entangled with race and class, and other forms of inequalities in society. Mosse (1993) indicates that women subordination within the family, communities, and beyond are due to patriarchal societal structures that placed male at the top compared to their female counterparts. Within the family men are at the top as decision makers and women are at the core of doing household chores. The cultural taboos and practices, religious beliefs and the legal systems are dominated by the male folks. Men dominated the public sectors compared to women who are more active within the private spaces as house wives, and farmers within the homes. Even women worked outside from the homes, they still take care of the household chores (Kabeer 2016; Mosse 1993; Momsen 2004). These imply that there is a clear division between men and women in economic development with men often at the center while women are often at its periphery (see Kabeer 2016; Boserup 1970 ‘geography of gender’).

Beneria et al. (2016) see gender inequality in relation to product differences. It is assumed that women are less productive than men in terms of time devoted, output, and quantity they produce within the industrial and service sectors. This reinforces gender inequalities in production, economic development and in the work places with women remains marginal compared to men. Others argue that gender inequality is the result of scarce material resources in society. As population increases, material resources is becoming scarce, men often dominate the society leading to women’s suppression and marginalization (Kabeer and Luisa 2013). Kabeer (2016) argues that gender and gender inequality are caused by culture and tradition. I quote,

Gender-ascribed constraints are rooted in the customary norms, beliefs, and values that characterize the “intrinsically gendered” relationships of family and kinship. They spell out dominant models of masculinity and femininity in different societies, allocating men and women and boys and girls to different roles and responsibilities on the basis of socially-constructed aptitudes and dispositions. Variations in the gendered division of labor between productive and reproductive work observed in different regions of the world partly reflect variations in these gender-ascribed constraints (Kabeer 2016:297).

In other words, Kabeer (2016) is saying that culture is the root of gender inequalities. Where there is cultural dominance, there will be persistent gender inequalities. The presence of gender inequalities around the world are an indication of long-standing cultural norms and values governing gender in society. Kabeer and Luisa (2013: 32-33) argue that,

Cultural variables have a significant impact on gender inequality. Gender inequalities continue, in most regions of the world, to reflect long-standing norms and values that govern relations between men and women in different socio-economic groups....gender inequalities are not immutable but can be acted on by a variety of forces, including those associated with economic growth.

However, the blame on traditional patriarchal institutions as the cause of women's subordination fails to consider the complex inequalities created due to economic development agendas and social structures based on class and collective identities (Coles et al. 2015; Kabeer 2016). Here, I argue that culture and tradition are not necessary the root cause of gender inequality. However, gender and gender inequalities are products of changes that it takes for a society to transform, forge gender relations, and adapt to changes leading to modernity.

Implications: Gender and economic development

Gender is not about woman alone (category 'women'). Gender is about women in relation to men. Gender and economic development means the incorporation of both men and women in development processes at all levels from community, national, regional and international (Mosse 1993). Gender inclusiveness of women in decision-making processes is important for sustainable project developments globally. This is illustrated in Dyer (2018:2), "women's lack of participation in important decision making is noted as an obstacle to sustainable development in many parts of the world." However, targeting men or women alone means ignoring half of the equation in economic development. This is demonstrated by Cole et al (2014:8) who state that, "targeting women or men alone is not sufficient to bring about enduring equality outcomes; action must cross actors and scales to create an enabling environment within which women and men can achieve expanded choice and improved livelihood and well-being outcome."

To engage in gender-sensitive approaches to economic development, both men and women need collective efforts in the processes it takes in project implementations at the community, national, and international levels (Coles et al. 2014; Kabeer 2003). Furthermore,

Van der Ploeg et al. (2016) state that inclusive leadership of both men and women in the rural communities, which encourages women's participation, is likely to bring some changes which include collaborative decision-making in society. Coles et al. (2014) further express similar sentiments on collaborative participation of both genders in economic development, with a need for structural and institutional changes to impact long-term changes in complex gender systems around the world. They state that,

Support for gender inequality and a more gender equitable world will require collaboration with both men and women, profound understanding of the patriarchal structures that underwrite and support gender bias in societies around the world and a set of policies and programs designed to undertake long-term change in the complex, highly rooted gender systems around the world (Coles et al. 2014:22)

Kabeer (2003) and Mosse (1993) confirmed that gender is a structural problem, and it is often hard to change it. Consequently, in order to impact changes, long-term commitment and engagement that help build the capacity of local people to transform gender norms, roles, and expectations in societies are important but very challenging because challenging gender means challenging the social structures and institutions in society (Lawless et al. 2017; Kabeer 2003; Mosse 1993). Weeratunge et al. (2012) urges one to look beyond the symptoms of gender inequalities, meaning transforming gender inequitable practices, norms, and expectations in society in order to achieve lasting outcomes in gender and development. They state that, "moving beyond addressing the symptoms of gender inequality to engaging with its causes requires socially and contextually nuanced analysis to inform the design of locally appropriate interventions at multiple scales – i.e. at the individual, household, community and macro policy level" (Weeratunge et al. 2012:5)

Mosse (1993) suggested the need for structural changes in economic development and social norms to pave the way for gender equitable practices, including women participation in decision-making and leadership, and access to and control over resources. Gender is challenging, since it is not a single issue on its own, it is entangled with status, class, race, ethnicity etc. This requires a diverse and multiples of analogies to look at the issue holistically. As Lewis (2002:7) expressed "power relations between men and women are complex, multi-dimensional and pervasive, and that a diversity of tools and angles are needed to disentangle and contest them." Exploring the web of inequalities and power structures in society is task challenging due to its

complexities from structural norms, values, and practices which supports existing inequalities including gender inequality (Cole, Kantor, Sarapura and Rajaratnam 2014; Harper et al. 2012). However, the need to be more specific, context based and realistic on gender inequalities are important, because gender and gender inequalities varies across societies and culture (El-Bushra 2000).

Judy El-Bushra (2000: 57) explains that people need to be realistic with gender inequalities. Global statistics on gender inequalities can be misleading, therefore gender inequalities needs to be more specific and context based. She states that,

While genuinely global statistics on gender inequalities raise awareness and are important for international activism and advocacy work, development practice needs to be based on an understanding of the relationship between global inequality and the context-specific experiences of individual women. The tendency in development agencies to oversimplify complex issues renders it harder to achieve solutions... Gender should be seen not as a politically correct ideology, but as an integral element in a wider search for a deep understanding of human behavior, which concerns itself with physical and emotional needs, perceptions, motivations, relationships and structures (El-Bushra 2000: 57 and 61).

Conclusion

The chapter highlights that gender and gender inequalities are a global issue. Consequently, governments, Nongovernment organizations, developmental partners, and international organizations have discussions about including gender sensitive approaches in economic development project planning and implementation in both developed and developing countries. Although, discussions about gender and economic development are made, gender and gender inequalities remains challenging, especially in implementing gender policies and actions related to equalities in participation, leadership and decision-making, access to and control over resources, asset, information etc. Challenging gender means challenging the social structures and institutions that govern gender, including other forms of inequalities (race, ethnicity, class, status etc). Gender inequalities are therefore structural problem. This is task challenging and it needs time, resources and collaborative efforts in order to transform gender inequitable practices in society. The word gender itself remained confusing and if often resisted by male dominated institutions. Targeting women alone in economic development remains challenging because gender is not only about women alone however it is about relationship between men and women. In order to achieve lasting gender equality it is argue that society and traditional gender norms

needs to transform. However, it is also highlighted that the push for economic developments can perpetuate and creates gender inequalities and women's suppression. Therefore the need to create discussions about changes that affects gender relations are important in order to mitigate the negative consequences of these changes, especially on women and girls. In this study, I suggest that international organizations focus on empowering women in their traditional roles and responsibilities, especially in the rural areas where kastom still exists other than attacking traditional gender relations. That would open doors for further women empowerment and economic development leading to transforming gender inequitable practices in ways that are harmonious and are accepted by the society. The more men and women are empowered in their traditional roles and responsibilities, the more likely both will be happy and contribute equally and significantly to the welfare of their families and communities. While it is important to understand gender concepts broadly, it is significantly important as well to explore context-specific cases based on people's experiences within their own society. This leads us into the next chapter of this thesis on gender and economic development in Solomon Islands.

CHAPTER 4. GENDER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Introduction

The chapter explores gender and economic development in Solomon. It consists of six parts. These six parts are: i) Solomon Islands; ii) kastom; iii) women economic empowerment; iv) gender norms, roles, and expectations; v) gender inequalities in Solomon Islands, including leadership and decision-making, access to and control over resources, changing household division of labour, increase gender-based violence, and v) conclusions.

Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands archipelago is a country in the south western Pacific. It has nearly 1000 islands that are scattered from the Shortland Islands in northwest to Tikopia and Anuta in the southeast, from Ontong Java in north to Rennell and Bellona in the south. It consists of six main islands: Choiseul, Santa Isabel, New Georgia, Guadalcanal, Malaita, and Makira, some dozens of small islands and hundreds of islets and atolls with a total land mass of 30,407 km², and economic exclusive zone (EEZ) of 1,340,000Km² (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office 2009; also see Moore 2017). It is located north-east of Australia, and south-east of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

The country has diverse cultures and ethnic groups that include Melanesians, Polynesians, Micronesians and others (Asians, Europeans, etc.). There are over 87 indigenous languages. Apart from the indigenous languages, most people speak pidgin (*pijin*) and many speak English as well. Solomon Islands is a former British colony. It gained constitutional independence in 1978, and subsequently adopted a Westminster system of government from its former colonial power, Great Britain (Bennett 1987).

The country now has a population of more than 600,000 people, which is projected to double in 2030 (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office 2009). In 2014 Women made up 49% of the total population of 572,171 (Rowland 2016). About 90% of the total population of Solomon Islands live in the rural areas. They are mostly farmers and fishers who are heavily dependent on the land and marine resources for their daily lives. Around 96% are farmers and 60% are fishers in the rural areas (Schwarz et al. 2014; Solomon Islands National Statistics

2009). Over 80% of land is owned by tribes or clans. These lands are inherited through the male (patrilineal) or female (matrilineal) lines (Rowland 2016; ADB 2015; Cox and Morrison 2004; Saeni 2008; Maetala 2008; Solomon Islands National Statistics Office 2009).

The archipelago is susceptible to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, earthquakes and Tsunamis (Solomon Islands National Statistics Office 2009). The country is amongst the lowest ranked with human development index of 156 out of 187 countries according to the United Nation's Human Development Index (UNDP 2016). Solomon Island's poverty is labeled as 'poverty of opportunity' because of less available opportunities for people to access in order to raise their standards of living (Lightfoot and Ryan 2001; also cited in Cohen P et al. 2015).

Kastom and Traditional societies

"Kastom," as it is used by Solomon Islanders, is not exactly the same as "custom" or "traditional society." Read David Akin (2013), *Colonialism, Maasina Rule, and the Origins of Malaita Kastom* <https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/54347/akin.pdf>. According to Akin (2013:7),

"Custom" expressed a British vision of Malaitan societies as ahistorical, static, and to some degree unchangeable, and "true customs" were conceived as surviving, authentic, pre-European ways of life. Malaitans recognized this as a contrivance, and their concept of *kastom* expressed their more realistic understandings of their own societies as dynamic, flexible, and rapidly changing. Malaitans demanded no ancestral pedigree for something to qualify as *kastom*, which encompassed fully new political structures and leadership, social and legal rules, innovative programs for great change, even labor strikes. *Kastom* labelled a political ideology and actions founded on Malaitans' determination to pursue change on their own terms, according to their own sensibilities.

Kastom in Solomon Islands varies across the islands. The kastom and tradition of the matrilineal societies are not entirely the same as that of the patrilineal societies. Even within the patrilineal and matrilineal societies, different language groups also have different kastom even though they may be similar in some aspects. Kastom of a place defines that place, and how people interact in their everyday life. These kastom are embedded in people's lives and influence their worldviews. People are grown up and are part of a society. The society is governed by its own kastom based on their own sensibilities. They are taught how to live in ways that society expects them to live, to talk, and participate in manners that do not deviate from societal norms, values, and expectations. Once someone breaks these kastom, the issue can be sorted out by

kastom practices and ways of solving disputes and often that person who breaks kastom values and practices may experience ridicule from members of the society. Kastom keeps members of the society together giving them a sense of belonging. Respect and mutual understanding are values deeply rooted with kastom. Men and women, boys and girls are taught about the values of respect since early childhood and are practiced in their daily lives. However, kastom is not static. It changes over time and is learned and passed on from one generation to another. What is practiced today may no longer appropriate in years to come and what is considered deviant now may become normal in the future (see Rowland 2016).

Colonization, Christianity and modern practices have influenced kastom in many ways. It changes the kastom norms, values and expectations including the structures and traditional set ups and people's worldviews. They bring with them sophisticated patriarchal structures of leadership claimed to teach people to know their position and rightful place in society. This however, reinforces male domination and female subordination within the patriarchal Christian and colonial structures (Pollard 2003). These structures are reproduced over the years by capitalism and globalization, and are institutionalized by the male dominated institutions in society (see Pollard 2003 & 2006; Rowland 2016).

In Solomon Islands many women and men support gender equity based on kastom, and often see women's right, human rights, women empowerment, and gender equality promoted by outside institutions and organizations as threatening the patriarchal structures and male positions as household heads, especially in patrilineal societies (Lawless et al. 2016). Therefore Rowland (2016: 7) suggested that "an appropriate approach to promoting equality in Solomon Islands is one that is paced to enable culture to adjust, focusing on the achievement of small gains over time" (also see Wallace 2011).

Many outside institutions and development organizations, including individual women and men, argue that kastom and tradition are the main barriers to women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes and empowerment within the family, community and national level. Men as household heads are said to prevent women's freedom of entering into leadership and decision-making processes, venturing into business opportunities, access to and control over resources, assets, information etc (Oxfam 2018; Rowland 2016). This is however

not always true, since women in the traditional matrilineal societies of Isabel, Guadalcanal, and Makira in Solomon Islands can be tribal chiefs and land owners, now they are part of the council of chiefs representing their tribes (Rowland 2016). In the traditional patrilineal societies, women often portrays character of the ‘big man’ which associate with feast giving, peace maker, and warrior entering enemy territory without them being touched or killed (Pollard 2006). The call for families, communities, institutions, and organizations to work on making these characters visible, recognized, appreciated and respected by the members of the society is needed.

Although, women are highly respected in the traditional societies, today these values of respect are still exist but are marginalized due to changes. Women often suffered discrimination at the community, work place, and beyond, and are victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment, gender inequalities, and women suppression in the society (Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012). Whatever it takes for the society to change in Solomon Islands, women often suffered the negative consequences of these changes. The abuse of kastom and tradition example bride price and man as the head of house has negatively affected women’s life in many ways from participating in household, community, and economic development activities.

Women economic empowerment

Economic development initiatives within families and communities were the most effective instigators for transforming traditional norms in society. It is often argued, especially by international NGOs and development partners, that women’s participation in and benefit from economic development will mitigate gender inequality. Oxfam International, for example, notes that, “women economic empowerment is a human rights and social justice issue for addressing significant disparities between women’s and men’s power, status and opportunities. It is also promoted as an instrument for economic growth, poverty reduction, and societal and family prosperity” (Oxfam 2018: 4). An Oxfam report (2018) on ‘community perceptions of gender norms and economic opportunity in rural Solomon Islands’ states that kastom or restrictive traditional norms are the main obstacle to women’s economic empowerment. The report said that household chores or burden of unpaid care work such as cooking, food preparation, washing, cleaning, laundry, child care and taking care of the sick, and providing moral supports are considered the biggest barriers to women economic empowerment. Men who undertake roles

perceived to be women's roles are often ridiculed by the community members, and vice versa for women who enter into men's spheres of influence, especially doing business, paid job, mobility etc. On top of that the report stated that the traditional practice of bride price was against women's human rights of venturing into business activities, access to resources, assets, leadership, and other opportunities (ibid).

It is argued that the kastom practice of bride price had given men the power to rule and lead over the family including the control over women's money, space, mobility, access to and control over resources, assets, information, and so forth; a term often refers to as the 'boss' of the house or head of the house. This prevents women from venturing into business opportunities in order to instigate changes in their lives and the lives of their families and communities. Kastom according to the report (Oxfam 2018) was a real stumbling block to women's advancement in business in rural Solomon Islands. Therefore it argued that the need is to transform kastom and traditional norms in order to achieve gender equality, women empowerment, women's human rights opportunities, and gender equitable practices in all aspects of life (social, economic, political) at the family, community, and national levels.

I suggested that an in-depth understanding of kastom and tradition of a particular place and context needs to be examined holistically in order to cultivate traditional knowledge that recognized women's power, and be able to use that to promote women's wellbeing in the rural areas. The stories behind bride price, and men as the head of the house for example needs to be explored fully, the stories that value relationships and respect and mutual understanding between men and women in marriage needs to be understood. These stories have been marginalized nowadays by modernization. Consequently, the motive underlying bride price has changed, leading to the commodification of marriages and the abuse of kastom, which reinforce gender inequalities, male domination and women's subordination, domestic violence, and inequitable practices. In the case of To'abaita, marriage is about relationships. In the past, as less as one red shell money would be paid by the groom, and that would be accepted and respected by the bride's family. What they valued most was the fact that relationships were created as a result of the marriage. During this study, I also found that the idea that a man was the head of the household was also misleading and misunderstood today. The man was not the 'boss' as is perceived nowadays. Rather, it was a mutual relationship that was based on respect, shared roles

and responsibilities. Today kastom intersects with the modern world, leading to the creation of new gender expectations, terms, misinterpretations, and confusions, conditions in marriages, families, communities, and so forth leading to increasing gender inequalities, violence, and issues. There was a lack of respect for women and girls today due to the decaying of the traditional values, norms, and practices that constitute mutual understanding, relationships, shared roles and responsibilities, and respect.

Gender norms, roles, and expectations

In Solomon Islands family and community are two closely related areas where gender roles, norms, and expectations are inscribed, constructed, and internalized by its members (Morgan et al. 2012). Pollard (1997: 48) in her study describes how the society defines girls and boys, women and men of rural Waisisi community in Solomon Islands;

Women (and girls) are taught to be submissive and silent while men (and boys) are taught to be out spoken, aggressive, strong and authoritative. Women must not hit back or retaliate if hit by a brother or the husband. During meetings, women do the cooking while men do the talking. Women are often on the periphery while the men are around the center of decision making. Women's work is associated with providing a service while men are assigned responsible position as decision-makers and head of households.

For more examples of discussions on this issue in relation to Solomon Islands, see Dyer 2016; Lawless et al. 2017; Lawless and Teioli 2015

In Solomon Islands traditional gender norms, roles and expectations are embedded everywhere in peoples' daily lives from within the family, community and to the national level and in all developmental spheres (social, economic, and political) (Weeratunge et al. 2012). In the rural Solomon Islands communities the word gender itself is becoming problematic as "gender" is often used interchangeably with the word "sex." In the rural Solomon Islands communities, most people are not clear about what the term "gender" means. Often times people use it as referring to "women's business," especially the push for women to be equal to men. That is seen as undermining men's position as the head of the household in society. Consequently, it is often resisted by members of the community; especially in places with patriarchal societies (Lawless et al. 2016; also see Oxfam 2018). Hence, gender equality is normally misunderstood by most people in Solomon Islands.

The need for rural communities to understand the meanings of gender, and gender equality is important in mainstreaming gender equitable practices in development projects in the rural areas. This is challenging because these concepts are new to most rural dwellers in the Solomon Islands where their daily lives are mostly governed by traditional values for many years until today. People in the rural areas of Solomon Islands find it hard to understand these concepts because even in most of their dialects, there is no word for gender as in English, usually it comes with description of how men and women are related and governed in the society they belongs. The Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (2001: page unknown) describe gender equality as follows:

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

At the government level, the Solomon Islands constitution recognized equality in humanity regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, class and other social status in society. Its obligation is to facilitate and create “a modern, united, and vibrant Solomon Islands founded on mutual respect, trust and peaceful coexistence in a diverse yet secure and prosperous community where tolerance and gender equality are encouraged and natural resources are sustainably managed” (ADB 2015: 6). However, regardless of being recognized in the constitution, the need for government to implement these policies remained minimal and challenging.

At the international level, the country partake in some international agreements such as the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognized that (i) women and men have equal rights to participate in and benefits from development (ii) gender inequality is a barrier to successful development” (ADB 2015:6). At the regional level, in 2012 the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) leaders in 2012 agreed to address gender equality. This is outlined in the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Millennium Development Goals, Revised Pacific Platforms for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality

(2005 – 2015), Pacific Plan, 42nd Pacific Islands Forum commitment to increase the representation of women in legislatures and decision making, and 40th Pacific Islands Forum commitment to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence.” (ADB 2015: 7). These agreements set the basis for government and partner organizations in facilitating gender equitable practices in all spheres of development in Solomon Islands. How development projects and programs deals with gender in Solomon Islands remained challenging especially in the rural areas.

Gender equality is not only about women. It is about social relationships and power dynamics between men and women and boys and girls. Women and men need to be fully engaged in promoting gender equality in order to explore the power relations and social structures that reinforce gender inequalities (ADB 2015). As indicated in the Solomon Islands Gender Equality and Women’s Development Policy,

Women and men are equal partners in the development of Solomon Islands, and places gender equality at the heart of economic and social progress, giving equal value to the roles and responsibilities of Solomon Islands’ women and men. It also recognizes that in order to redress gender inequality it is necessary to invest in women’s development while women and men work together to address attitudinal and institutional barriers to gender equality (ADB 2015:7).

In the Pacific Islands, gender and gender inequality needs to be addressed to pave the way for better development outcomes in all walks of life (economic, political, and social). Many agricultural, natural resource management and development initiatives are carried out in ways that do not unpack the power relations and social structures that reinforce existing inequalities (Meinzen-Dick et al .2011a; Resurreccion and Elmhirst 2009) and this can contribute to unequal distribution of benefits which further disadvantages and isolates the most marginalised people in society, especially for women and girls. Gender inequality has become widely recognised as a barriers impacting negatively on development ambitions within Melanesian countries (Krushelnytska 2015).

Gender Inequalities in Solomon Islands

Kastom and traditional societies are often portrayed the root cause of gender inequalities. Gay (2009:183) indicated that “gender inequalities in Solomon Islands are rooted in tradition and culture, maintained through everyday relations between men and women at the household level.” Alice Pollard (2000:5-6) claims that,

In the traditional political arena women lack formal positions of authority, although they often wield considerable influence behind the scenes...even in the matrilineal societies, women have traditionally exerted political authority through male spokesperson. In the patrilineal societies – much more numerous than the matrilineal ones – the formal decision-making process traditionally has rested exclusively with men.

Dyer (2016:177) shares similar perspective on cultural barriers to women in leadership and decision making roles. She says that, “women are brought up in cultures that emphasize male superiority... In most islands, this means men make decisions and have the final say and women are silent” (Dyer 2016: 177). Similarly, Pollard (2000:38) affirms that,

...despite the indispensable contribution that women make to community life, their social status is quite low in comparison to their menfolk. Women are conditioned to be submissive and silent, while men are taught to be outspoken, aggressive, strong, and authoritative...During community meetings, women are on the periphery, men at the centre of the decision-making process.

Maetala (2010) asserts that women in Solomon Islands are caught between two worlds – traditional and modern. While the push for economic development is a priority in rural areas, at the same time women are pulled back to do their traditional roles within their families and communities, leading to women performing multiple tasks and role overload. Pollard (1997: 27) described the status of the women in the “third world” in relation to development projects and programs as,

Despite rural development programs and projects proposed by the government and international organizations, their positions has diminished and workload increased. Changes for rural women in third world have not been positive and encouraging. They spend longer hours in the farm, do labour intensive tasks, have no or little access to resources and have taken on the roles that the men have left. However, it has been noted that women’s groups and non-government organizations both at local, national, and international levels in the regions are engaging in different programs to address the marginalization and subordination of women.

Michelle Dyer shares similar points as Pollard. She said that women disempowerment is the result of custom combine with foreign leadership patriarchal structures. She said,

Women’s disempowerment in modern day Solomon Islands may be seen as a result of traditional gender norms combined with the effects of a patriarchal colonization process, which includes the influence of Christian doctrine. This combined effect of these influences marginalized women’s public presence, access to education, job, and physical mobility (Dyer 2016:97).

Recent social and gender benchmarking research in North Malaita, Solomon Islands found that at the community level men have tended to have greater opportunities to access knowledge and livelihood opportunities than women (Lawless and Teioli 2015). Leadership and problem solving within communities were predominately the responsibility of men and women's participation in meetings, workshops, or trainings and developments was limited. Women's ability and freedom to participate in decision-making processes with men, both at the household, and community levels were minimal. It is usually men who have the final say in household decisions. However, this is starting to change in recent times. Gender inequalities is prevalent at all developmental levels within the country, especially in decision-making and leadership, access to and control over resources, household division of labour, and increasing gender-based violence. These prevalent gender inequalities are intertwined in all aspects of economic developments in Solomon Islands from within the rural villages and to the national levels (Oxfam 2018). It is therefore important to understand how gender and gender inequalities are displayed in economic development initiatives in Solomon Islands.

Decision-making and leadership within the family, community, and national level

Decision-making and leadership are traditionally considered to be men's job (Morgan et al. 2012; ADB 2015; Rowland 2016; Oxfam 2018). Women rarely hold formal positions in the community, such as chief, tribal heads, village chairman or any positions of power and authority similar to their male folks. Women are less likely to be involved in most of the decision-making processes in the family, community and the national level (Cohen et al. 2016; Dyer 2016; Lawless et al. 2017; Lawless and Teioli 2015; Pollard 1997). According to Schwarz et al. (2014:3) "men are better represented on local committees and in regional and national politics."

Morgan et al. (2012) states that women holding top leadership positions make up only a small percentage, compared to men. Nationally, there are only 2% of women leaders in parliament compared to 4% at the provincial government level (Morgan et al. 2012). Within the public sector, women make up for 40% of the public service work pool. Out of that, only 5% hold higher positions while the rest are within the low to mid-level positions compared to their male counterparts. Women participation in paid work is less compared to men both in the rural and urban areas. In the rural areas 19% women and 42% men are employed in paid work compared to 62% women and 88% men in the urban areas. A high percentage of women fall

under the vulnerability employment (subsistence work, self-employed, and unpaid family work) category with 75% and 54% men. There are zero women charge compared to men within the legislative hierarchy. Women remain the minority leaders within the formal sectors compared to men (ADB 2015; also see Oxfam 2018).

The participation of women in economic development activities, especially in small-scale businesses and initiatives is found to be higher and progressing but was constrained by women's lack of access to and control over resources, assets, finance, social capital, mobility, networking, partnering, education, market, transport, including negative gendered stereotypes and domestic violence on women which limits their capacity from progressing further with their developmental aspirations (ADB 2015). The underlying barriers to women economic development are rooted in kastom and restrictive traditional norms associated with women's roles as household chores, bride price, male domination expressed in household heads and decision makers controlling women's freedom of entering into business spheres, and economic development initiatives example FADs, access to and control over resources, networking, mobility, information etc, including on-going domestic violence and denial of women's human rights opportunities and wellbeing (Oxfam 2018).

Access to and control over resources (including assets, money, information and mobility)

Resources such as land are acquired through the male line (patrilineal) or female line (matrilineal) in Solomon Islands. Land in Solomon Islands patrilineal societies are traditionally passed on to the first born sons. Even if there were no sons in the family, fathers would not consider passing it to her daughters, instead he passes it on to a male relative (Morgan et al. 2012).

Even within the matrilineal societies, women still do not have the ultimate decision and control over land, when it comes to land dealings and negotiating roles with the government, investors, and companies for example men are always at the front line in decision making and land dealings (ADB 2015; Cohen et al. 2016; Dyer 2016; Morgan et al. 2012; Schwarz et al. 2014). Kaubutaulaka (2000:94) stated that "large scale logging on customary land require representatives, 'trustees', on logging license; and these people are usually men". At the community level according to Schwarz (2014:3) "women have limited access to information as

information is often passed through the leaders which are mostly men, contributing to men controlling also women's time, and participation in work outside of the family.”

A study conducted in rural Solomon Islands indicated that 58% of men and 47% of women said women have no control over the money they earned themselves (Boso and Schwarz 2009; also see Oxfam 2018). Similarly, access to assets such as agricultural tools, and fishing gears for example are given the priority to men (Morgan et al. 2012:11 also see Cohen et al. 2015; Lawless and Teioli 2015; Schwarz et al. 2014; Weeratunge et al 2012).). This limits women's capacity to innovate and drive changes within the family, community, and national level (Cohen et al. 2016; Dicker, Kiri et al. 2016). Women and girl's movement are strictly monitored compared to men and boys with some degree of flexibility in movement having less connection to organizations, information, and resources outside the homes (Cohen et al. 2015; Lawless and Teioli 2015; Morgan et al. 2012; Schwarz et al. 2014).

Changing household division of labour

In the past women and men were engaged in specific tasks, where women tended to spend most of the time around household activities while men built houses and went fishing and hunting (Schwarz et al. 2014). Today men can perform work in collaboration with each other. Men can perform roles used to do only by women such as washing the dishes, cooking, cleaning the house, fetching water, and looking after the kids and vice versa for women performing men's roles such as fishing, work outside of homes and so forth, especially women with paid jobs (Lawless and Teioli 2015). Gendered roles and expectations within the household division of labor have shifted from more tasks specific to multi-tasked activities in contemporary Solomon Islands societies today.

Ross (2007) stated that the household division of labour is unjust in burdening mostly women in doing most of the household chores and related activities even if they employed in the workforce outside from home. Women feel that they are tasked with multiple tasks and obligations to fulfill from family, community and tribal commitments (Cohen et al. 2016; Lawless and Teioli 2015; Morgan 2012; Ross 2007). These shifting gender norms, roles and expectations also devalue the traditionally male dominated spheres bringing male identities or manhood into question (Coles et al. 2014). Dyer (2016:161) stated that “male identities are challenged by equality in education and modernization generally which has resulted in their

reversion to “delinquency and alcohol abuse.” The ADB (2015:5) report states that, “[i]n Melanesian culture male roles in traditional governance, ritual, and warfare have been undermined by modern influences. As a result more negative forms of masculinity, including binge drinking, sexual promiscuity, and denigration of women, have taken their place.”

Willer et al. (2013) suggests that men whose masculinity was threatened adopted stronger dominance attitudes, and that these threats motivate them to reassert their support for hierarchies and their position in them. Akao et al. (2010:73) stated that “in the big man society [men]...who hold power pay back by suppressing women who oppose them or question what they are doing” (Dyer 2016:138). Regardless of the changes within the household division of labour, women often face the consequences of the changes that alter traditional gender norms, roles and expectations, especially from their male partner, family and community members often resulting in women being stigmatized and it may lead to physical violence (Cohen et al.2016; Lawless and Teioli 2015; Morgan 2012).

Increase Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women in the Solomon Islands is reported epidemic (NGEWDP 2016-2020). The Family Health and Safety Study (cited in ADB 2015) states that most domestic violence cases in Solomon Islands are related to women’s decision making in their assigned responsibilities such as burning food, not having it prepared on time, or spending money in an unacceptable way. When they did it wrong their husband have the power to beat them. It is reported that,

Nearly 2 out of 3 women age 15 – 49 who had been in a relationship reported experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner. And 42% of women reported such experience in the last 12 months. For physical violence, 75% of women with such experience reported severe forms of intimate violence, while 25% reported moderate violence (ADB 2015: 68-69).

Cohen et al. (2016:314) points out that, “increase access to cash by men was linked to increase in alcohol-related incidents, and women suggested that alcohol consumption hindered people’s ability to improve their well-being.” Morgan’s et al. (2012: 6-7) gender situational review study reveals that “a man is justified in beating his wife under some circumstances (in particular for infidelity and disobedience)” (also see SPC 2009: 3; Dyer 2016). The Oxfam (2018) report states that gender violence has formalized by the kastom practice of bride price,

giving the authority for men to beat their wife and have total control over women's lives. In whatever situation, it is important to make sure women and girls are treated with care and respect.

Dyer's (2016) study in Kolombangara Island implied that women find it hard to refuse sexual intercourse from their husband, especially when the husband is under the influence of liquor. They will just follow orders from their husband just to avoid physical violence from husbands. However, since most of the systems of power structures are controlled by men, gendered-based violence cases is often influence by custom and tradition including church teachings that reinforce male authorities, and women's fear of violence from their male counterpart had prevented them from challenging the power structure and status quo which makes their lives miserable (ADB 2015).

Conclusion

In summary gender inequality is persistent within the country's rural communities and at the national level. Women's participation in the formal sector is low. Their participation in parliament is also low (ADB 2015; Morgan et al. 2012). Women's access to and control over resources, assets, information, decision making, and opportunities is limited, a major constraint on women's and girl's capacity to instigate and drive changes (Cohen et al. 2016; Cohen et al. 2015; Krushelnyska 2015; Lawless and Teioli 2015; Pollard 1997; Schwarz et al. 2014). Violence against women is high within the country due to uneven shifts in the gendered systems and ongoing lifelong inequalities. Over the years changes altering gender division of labour within the families and communities are evident with growing economic developments (ADB 2015; also see Dyer 2016; Morgan et al. 2012; SPC 2009). All of these are situated within kastom and tradition as the main barriers to women economic development, and therefore organizations uses economic development to transform gender in the rural Solomon Island communities.

However, I argue that kastom is not necessary the root cause of gender inequalities in Solomon Islands. Gender and gender inequalities are reinforced and are recreated by complex of changes and processes it takes for the society to transform. It is important to cultivate traditional knowledge and values that recognize the substantial power of women, and be able to communicate that in gender programs in the rural areas as first steps in mainstreaming gender in

the local communities. The deteriorating of cultural values of respect are underlying factors contributing to complex gender disparities and issues today. Even though women are empowered through economic development, but if there is lack of respect for being a woman, gender inequalities, women's suppression, and violence against women and girls will always remain persistent.

The next chapter focuses on the nature of gender relations in To'abaita, Solomon Islands. The re-examining of these kastom and traditional values in To'abaita are important for understanding gender from the local context, and be able to see how to carry out local rural development projects in ways that can empower both men and women together.

CHAPTER 5. GENDER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN TO'ABAITA: Exploring the power relations between men and women

Introduction

There lives a man named Bari'i in a place called Fau'iwane up on the hills in between the Mbita'ama and Malu'u peninsula in To'abaita at the northern tip of Malaita Island. It happened that there was a parrot named Suriaoa that came from a place known as Mota. Suriaoa left Mota and came to Fau'iwane, and perched on a tree called Bubuafehea. At the top of Bubuafehea tree, Suriaoa sing chirping. Bari'i was tempted by the sound of the chirping bird. So he came out from his small hut with his bow and arrow with the intention of shooting the bird. But as he looked up and saw Suriaoa he was impressed with the red, yellow, blue, black and green feather of the bird that was looking down at him.

"What kind of bird are you? Where did you come from?" Bari'i asked the colourful parrot.

"I came from Afehea, Afemana, Fulafula, Notoe, Auriki, Kwaluigwa, Safaiko, Mutana thalo," Suriaoa response.

Bari'i told Suriaoa not to leave Fau'iwane but to stay with him. Suriaoa lived with Bari'i in Fau'iwane, and Bari'i loved Suriaoa more than anything in Fau'iwane. One day Bari'i planned to organize a mortuary feast for people to know about the story of Suriaoa. So he sends his wife with a banana leaf to the coast of Malanaofe, Mbita'ama, and Malu'u in search for any fish that was big as the banana leaf. People doubted that there was no such a fish anyone could catch it. Bari'i stayed in Fau'iwane and decided to go for a fishing trip on his own. Bari'i went fishing, and he lightened a fire to bake the fish he catches in a traditional oven on top of a stone. Bari'i did not know that there is a traditional war canoe named Ludalalamoa and Re'ethangobulu from Kaore, Oreore, Ae'butha they saw the fire and followed it slowly in silence. They took Bari'i with them. They tied Bari'i in front of the door of their small hut, so when people went in and out from the hut they stepped on him. In the absence of Bari'i in Fau'iwane, Suriaoa was neglected by eight young girls in Fau'iwane. These girls did not want to see Suriaoa anymore; they intimidate Suriaoa, swore at him and did not want to feed him. They told him to go look for Bari'i. Suriaoa cried and in tears flew along the coast in search for Bari'i. Suriaoa discovered where they catch his father Bari'i and he flew to Kaore, Oreore, and Ae'butha, and saw his father Bari'i tied to be killed. Suriaoa flew down to Bari'i, crying, and jumped onto the ground coming closer to Bari'i. Bari'i was watched by the children while the men and women went out into the garden harvesting taro, collecting fire wood, leaf, bamboo, and water. These children saw Suriaoa and were tempted to catch the bird. They tried it multiple times but they could not catch the bird. Bari'i then asked the children to untie him to catch the bird for them, they untie Bari'i and within a very small time, Bari'i sneaked among the bushes and ran away followed Suriaoa at the top. The children quickly beat the wooden drum and alerted their men of the escape. The men quickly mobilized themselves from the four corners of Kaore, Oreore, and Ae'butha. Bari'i could not make it without a woman, the wife of the great warrior and chief of that place who is behind the kidnapping of Bari'i. The woman saw Bari'i and she sympathized with him, she waved her arms towards Bari'i to come to her. She told Bari'i to lie down in a valley inside her garden, and she throws the weeds, rubbish including the taro she just harvested, and the woods from her garden onto Bari'i. The men came following Bari'i's foot print towards the garden, they asked the woman if she saw Bari'i, she denied, they continue to persuade her until she turned to them and swear with exposing her body to the men. It is culturally taboo for a woman to do that which

will result in killing or paying of compensation. The men left without saying any word. Bari'i was saved by the woman. Suriaoa and Bari'i went back to Fau'iwane. Suriaoa arrived first in Fau'iwane and told the girls that Bari'i is on his way and soon he will arrive in Fau'iwane. The girls did not believe him, and continue to swear at him. After a while, Bari'i entered in Fau'iwane. Suriaoa cried, and told Bari'i he will leave Fau'iwane because of the ill-treatment by the girls during his absence. Bari'i and the girls cried and tried to stop Suriaoa, asking for forgiveness. But Suriaoa would not listen. He flew up to the top of Bubuafelea. The girls tried to get him down with a bamboo, but Suriaoa flew high and higher. Suriaoa left Fau'iwane and flew all the way to Ndai Island. Suriaoa stayed and died in Ndai Island. Since then, Fau'iwane's story was passed down from generation to generation till today. It is a sacred place; a place of "green leaf" or magic (ilu, Babatana, Manululu, Kokona, ma Liorodo). However, today the 'green leaf' or magic now is money.

Stories are powerful. They can be manipulated to kill and heal people, calm or trigger situations. Stories in traditional To'abaita set the basis of human interaction in society. The giving away of traditional stories are contributing factors towards gender inequitable practices and issues today. A story could be about *foa'a* (prayer), *akalimae* (ancestor), *sulagwaua* (history), *talisibaraa* (geneology), *gano/fanua* (land and place), *aludooa/falea* (property/gift), *kwaifa'amanataia* (advise), *ramoa* (aggressiveness), *ilu* (magic) etc. These stories govern the traditional gender norms, roles, and expectations in To'abaita. The above story implied that in traditional To'abaita societies women are sacred. They can walk in enemy territory without being killed or touched. They can interfere in a raid to restore peace. Without the women, Bari'i would have been killed. Women are the mainstay of the To'abaitan society.

This chapter aims to trigger families, communities, and organizations to be conscious about mainstreaming gender equitable practices in economic development in the rural areas. This chapter is organized into these following sections; i) To'abaita, ii) the construction of gender in traditional To'abaita society, iii) household division of labour in traditional To'abaita society, iv) gender boundaries, v) changing nature of To'abaita society, vi) changing household division of labour in To'abaita, and vii) conclusion.

The chapter discusses the changes in To'abaita, especially in the post-WWII period. These changes create complex outcomes, including gender inequalities, especially in the division of labour within households in To'abaita. In this chapter, I challenge the perceptive that kastom and indigenous cultures are the roots of gender inequality. I argue that gender inequality in To'abaita, as we know it today, is the product of the process of change, which creates new

expectations on gender relations. This is a process of complex intersection between old and new ways of looking at gender roles have resulted in the deterioration of the mutually-supportive gender roles that characterised traditional To'abaita society.

To'abaita

To'abaita is located in the northern tip of the island of Malaita in Solomon Islands. It borders with the neighbouring Mbaelelea from Roso to Sulagwalu, and further inland villages of Anikwaikwai', Kwaita'u, and Gwaia'u. To'abaita and Mbaelelea are two different language groups. The coastal areas are the home to most settlements in To'abaita, accessible to the road that connects the region to the Provincial capital, Auki, which is in central Malaita. It also connects To'abaita to Fouia in the Lau language group. To'abaita is a patriarchal society where men are considered the household and tribal heads. Land is tribally owned and is traditionally transferred through the male line. The people speak To'abaita language (Frazer 1981, Saeni 2008, Faiau 2013).

To'abaita has a population of about 12,625 people of 6,350 male and 6,275 female (Solomon Islands Statistics Office. 2009). Currently the region has 6 secondary schools, 21 primary schools, and at least 2 vocational schools. The region's Area Health Center is located in Malu'u. Rural Health Centres are located in Mbita'ama, and Fo'ondo, including extension health services to the inland communities of Gwaiu, and coastal areas of Malathawa and Orukalia.

Infrastructure developments in To'abaita are minimal. It lacks proper roads, wharves, and other essential economic development services. For many people, the main source of income was from fishing, gardening, copra, and cocoa, including selling of baked flour, betel nuts, home tobacco and cigarettes. Others engaged in running small businesses such as village canteens or retail stores, transport services, piggery, and poultry. Teachers, nurses, police officers and other government employees earn a stable salary. They travel to Auki during pay days to access their pay through the banks.

The main source of transport is public vehicles at the cost of \$40 - \$100 SBD or more, and by taxi which the cost may range from \$1,000 SBD and beyond. No bus service is available from Auki to To'abaita. There are 2 buses that serve in Malu'u to Afufu to Silolo in To'abaita

during the time of this research. It takes almost 4 hours to travel by vehicle from Auki in Central Malaita to Malu'u in north Malaita. During Christmas and holidays when more people are travelling, it is risky for passengers due to excessive loads of goods and passengers.

Currently the region has 7 House of chiefs, who governs the To'abaita tribal issues such as land and conflict settlements. These house of chief are: i) Nofe (previously known as Faulkwae), ii) Rumunafau, iii) Booboaa, iv) Manulafa, v) Faudedema, vi) Matakwalao (see Saeni 2008:92), and vii) Iligu house of chiefs. Within each house of chiefs it has a paramount chief responsible for issues within its territory. Faulkwae (now Nofe), Faudedema, and Rumunafau house of chiefs was started in 1974, later in 1984 the Manulafa house of chiefs was formed and in year 2000 and 2002 respectively the Matakwalao and Booboaa house of chiefs was established and recently in 2018 the Iligu house of chiefs came into existence. The Faulkwae house of chief's name has changed to Nofe house of chiefs in year 2010 since Faulkwae is just a name of a village that has no connection to the heritage in To'abaita.

At the family and community level, family members and relatives support one another during bride and compensation payment, funerals, feasts, church anniversaries, and other important occasions. These form the basis of community and family solidarity and integration, a sense of belonging to a community, tribe or group of people (Faiau 2013). These cultural practices and values shape and influence livelihood activities within the region and formed the foundation of the family, communities, and tribes in To'abaita where everyone depend on each other when the need arises (Suinao 2008). "Manner, respect and friendliness are basic principles that band friends and relatives together" (Saeni 2008:109).

The region is dominated by the Christian churches including South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC), Anglican (church of Melanesia), Catholic, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, Assemblies of God (AOG), Church of the Living Word, and some family units belong to the Bahai faith, and other Christian sects. Christianity has had a longer history in the region and has influenced life more (Frazer 1982; Moore 2017). Frazer (1981:95) states that the, "conversion to Christianity was basic to all the important changes evident in the recent history of the To'abaita."

Recently, the ‘estate movement’ under the teaching of Rev. Michael Maeliau has grown profoundly in the rural areas of To’abaita and Mbaelelea and other parts of Malaita. The movement collectively implements activities from prayer events and programs with more focus on the spiritual aspects of development with the belief that a successful development is one that cannot ignore the spiritual aspects of life (Faiau 2013).

Since the 1970s when Frazer did his research in To’abaita, a lot has been change. There is more of flexibility in migration for men, women, and young people leaving the rural areas to Honiara and abroad for education, employment, and other purpose. Villages and communities continue to expand in the rural areas due to increasing population, and with the two telecommunication companies (Telekom and B-mobile) operates in Solomon Islands, family members and friends from within the country and abroad are stay connected through social media.

The push for economic development activities continue to evolve in the region. As pointed by Ian Frazer (1981) as the means of participation in the market economy changes and diversifies, and fuels competition in To’abaita. This competition set the direction for change in To’abaita. Frazer states,

It is this competition which is now determining the direction of social and economic change and leading to ever-increasing dependence on cash. Everyone has a strong interest in building up the level of their income. Hence the increasing amount of time put into cash cropping and a strong propensity to try out anything thought to bring in money, or to make money ‘grow’. As incomes have increased, purchased food (imported food and locally produced market produce has come to make up a larger proportion of household consumption. Purchases of consumer goods, clothing, and other items have also increased. House constructions and styles are also changing with increasing preference for imported materials and foreign (government) designs (Frazer 1981:112-113).

These changes have altered the traditional norms and values including gender norms, roles, and expectation in the To’abaita society. However, there is minimal understanding about gender in To’abaita. The need to better understand gender in To’abaita is important for future generations, and international organizations to effectively carryout development in the rural areas with tact. James Ofasia (2003:9) illustrates male domination in To’abaita as follows, “[p]eople of each clan are often spoken of the bi’u wane. When translated, bi’u means “house” and wane

means men. This excludes the women, because To'abaita men are connected with everything, but not so for women."

The above statement by Ofasia (2003) still lacked in-depth understanding of gender in To'abaita. Similarly, Saeni (2008) confirmed that gender and culture had challenged the implementation of the Family tree approach, an approach aimed at curbing the complexities regarding land ownership, land disputes, and land registration and development in rural customary lands in To'abaita. He said, "In To'abaita, gender and culture are contributing issues, which cause difficulties to the Family Tree Approach", as "female were not expected to hear or to read genealogies because they were considered filthy and ritually unclean ..." (Saeni 2008:44).

In an interview with Jimmy Lusibaea, the former honourable member for To'abaita or north Malaita constituency for proposing her wife Vika Lusibaea to stand on his behalf in the 2012 by-election, while he was imprisoned for his involvement in the ethnic crisis in the Solomon Islands in years 1998 to 2003. Lusibaea said,

When we went home, I already knew how I had to speak to the people there. Because To'abaita, the name of our region itself, means men are bigger or more important than women and this is the mentality of us To'abaitans. I told them three things: first, that the Westminster system of government is a foreign concept with a woman, Queen Elizabeth, at its head. It is not a cultural entity otherwise I would not be putting Vika forward as a candidate. Secondly, I told them we need Vika to be elected in order for our work and the programs we started to continue, and finally I challenged them to make history by becoming the first constituency in Malaita province to elect a woman to parliament (Lusibaea in Hawkins 2012; also see Rowland 2016:12-13).

The need not to belittle women and girls based on generalizations was a growing concern, and so gender context and specific studies are encouraged in order to understand gender holistically (El-Bushra 2000). The question of power, leadership and decision making, within the family, community, and at the national levels remains challenging, especially for women contesting for seats in the national parliament (Rowland 2016; Dicker et al 2016; Pollard 2006). People have voted Vika as seen in the example above on the basis that she would be in a good position to secure the seat in parliament for her husband (Rowland 2016). To be conscious about gender in the rural areas, there is a need to understand how gender evolves as the society changes in the rural areas.

In traditional To'abaita society men are the heads of the house, especially in leadership and decision-making, and they protect the family. Women on the other hand rarely involve in public politics and leadership, they are however anchored within the house, responsible for most of the household chores. This power relation between men and women in To'abaita could clearly be labelled as women subordination and marginalization. However, as we shall see in this chapter there is more to it than that. To address this gap the research approach allows women and men to speak for themselves. As Keesing (1987:33) who used this approach to study Kwaio women in Malaita said "[o]ne approach to thorny problems of interpreting gender in non-western societies in terms of western concepts - of inequality, domination, power, status - is to let women and men speak for themselves."

Early childhood to Adulthood socialization: The construction of gender in traditional To'abaita Society

In the traditional To'abaita society the construction of gender begins within the home as a collective effort from both parents. From the time of pregnancy to the time of birth and even after birth the child was raised by both parents before he or she was proclaimed as a man and woman, male and female. Life could be hard in those days as everyone could imagine, but let us not forget that within kastom there are gender values and norms that needs to be promoted for good cause in social, economic, and political spheres.

The word gender is new to most of the people in To'abaita. There is no one word as "gender" in the To'abaita language. In other words, in the To'abaita society, there is no such word in the local dialect that is equivalent with the English word, 'gender.' In the To'abaita language, the terms *wane-wane ni bona'a* and *kini-kini ni bona'a* are used, which are actually a reference to someone's sex – male and female – rather than gender. In an interview with Bila'u he describes men and women in the To'abaita language as "*Wane wane ni bona'a, kini kini ni bona'a*"; men will always be men and women will always be women (Bila'u, personal interview, April 22, 2018). Meaning men and women are not always equal but they are different. People continue to used sex and gender interchangeably. However gender is socially and culturally constructed where as sex is genetically inherited or biologically determined (Lawless et al.2017; Oakley 1972). To ask about gender one need to probe about what it means to be a man and a

woman or male and female in To'abaita. Often people would refer to women and men's roles, responsibilities, relationships, and interactions in the society they belong. Narokobi (1980:70) expressed similar sentiment in neighbouring Melanesian country of Papua New Guinea. He said,

In the Bukip language there are no words or phrases which suggest that women are in any way inferior to men in a general sense. There are no words or phrases which suggest equality. There are expressions, however, which suggest differences but being different does not of itself suggest inequality.

According to the interviews conducted in the study on the creation of gender in To'abaita, it is obvious that the creation of a gender in the To'abaita society is a process; it starts from birth, the raising of a child, and when he/she becomes a man and a woman. This process begins in the family with the parent-child relationships. It is then reflected in a child's interactions with people outside the family. The way in which a child is socialized depends on whether the child is male or female. As the child grows she or he is expected to behave, act, and perform roles and responsibilities either as a man or a woman. The child is raised and taught through *Kwaifa'amanataia* (with words of mouth), and actively engaged in *Raa, too la, ma abula la* (everyday practices), and *Kwairo'omia* (interact with others) as either a *wele'e wane* (male) or a *wele'e kini* (female). These are internalized by the family members and it became part of their everyday life and practices in the communities and families. Today, influences on and perceptions about gender roles come from, not just families, communities and tribes, but also from schools, churches, employments, social media, and forces that compliment, compete, or complicate what would be regarded as "traditional" gender norms, roles and expectations within the families, and communities.

In the traditional To'abaita society, the parent-child relationship begins when the child is still inside her mother's womb until the child is born. During period of pregnancy, the husband and wife have conversations about how they expect their child to grow up with *tafo lioto'oa* (wisdom) within 3-5 months of pregnancy. Six (6) to seven (7) months of pregnancy is called *O'uli ai*. The time where the husband and wife talk about and ensure that nothing wrong happens between the two of them. These include things such as dishonest practices such as infidelities. This is to avoid complications during birth of a child. Eight (8) to nine (9) months is called *ara la*, meaning the time of birth of the child. When it is born, the child is announced as either a boy or a girl.

When the wife is pregnant, she stays in the *luma* (family house/dwelling house) until it is time to give birth, and then she goes to stay in a leaf hut called *angaru'u* also known as *pisi*. This hut is built away from the rest of the living houses. She gives birth to the child without anyone's help. She goes to the garden with her child, fetch water, bathe and cook on her own. The garden she uses is made by her and her husband purposely for her to eat from during her stay away from the main living house. If the woman gives birth during *sikia* (new moon), she will stay there for two months, and if she gives birth during *arakwaa* (full moon), she and her baby will stay away from the dwelling house for three months before returning. After giving birth in *angaru'u/pisi* (birth hut), the woman and her baby then move in the second left hut called *keru'u* and sleep there for a night, then she move to a third house known as *lumaru'u*. *Lumaru'u* is built by men whereas *angaru'u* and *keru'u* are built by women. She stays in the *lumaru'u* for a long time until she performs a ritual known as *the'eru nanao la*, meaning the women throws ashes from the fire for women and girls, and performs a prayer known as *foa'a ni kini*, which simply means 'women's prayer'. She then cooks some food and gives it to the women and girls in the dwelling house. Now she is free to talk, meet, and mingle with women and girls. Then after sometime she throws the ashes again for young boys, and cooks some food and gives it to the boys. This allows her to talk, meet and interact with the young boys. It takes a long time before she finally throws ashes for men, and she cooks food for the men to end the process. It was a difficult life for women, as one of those interview states,

Today life is easy; we have clinics, nurses, and medicines. There are also sanitary products for women and girls to use during menstruation. We live together in the same house, boys and girls mixed with each other, and treat each other the same. Boys live in separate rooms but in the same house: *Too la e ruru na'a, ka hai na'a ta abua, ka hai na'a ta suaa, imole kera to ruru bada* (Suru, personal interview, July 30, 2018).

For the first time the mother bathe the child, the mother talks to the child saying, "today I bathe you with goodness, wisdom, and success in your life" (*Itaraena ni nau ku siufi oe ana le'a la, lioto'oa, mamana, inatooa ma taloa*) (Bila'u, personal interview, April 22, 2018). The same when she first feeds the child: "I feed you with goodness, wisdom and success today" (*Itaraena ni nau ku fa'a fanga oe ana le'a la, lioto'oa, mamana, inatooa, ma taloa*) (Bila'u, personal interview, April 22, 2018). In the past, the mother feeds the baby directly from her mouth; she chews the food and feeds the baby from her mouth. Today food is mashed in a plate or cup before being fed to the baby with a spoon. Similarly, in the past the child is breastfeed directly

from the mother's breast. However, today things have changed and children are breastfeed using bottles and artificial milk sold in the shops. It was against the traditional rules and norms of raising a child in traditional To'abaita society, especially as the responsibility of the mother.

For boys, when the child reaches between 12-24 months, he is taken to the *arai ni fo'a* also known as *wane ni fo'a* or *suru ai* (priest) by a young female who hands the baby to a young boy who in turn hands the child to the priest. The child is decorated with ornaments and his hair is shaved. The priest dedicates the child to the ancestors and he prays for *lioto'oa* (wisdom), *le'a la* (goodness), *taloa* (success), and *ramoa* (aggressiveness). This allows the child to learn and know about his *foa'a* (prayer), *talisibaraa* (geneology), *akalimae* (ancestors), and *gano* (land). The priest offers prayers of dedication so that the *akalo* (spirits) will know the child, protect him, and watch over him in his life and the priest gives him *kakata*: a mixture of betel nut with lime, ginger and some betel leafs. This rite is called *fa'amemengoa* (also see Frazer 1981). After the child is been *fa'amemengoa*, the child has become taboo. He visits and sleeps with men and boys in the men's house (*bi'u*), he is restricted from going with his mother, when his mother has menstruation, and he is respected by woman and girls in the family. He is now a man. This ritual involves feasting, chanting, and most importantly the giving of the betel nut (*kakata*) by the priest to the child (*fa'amemengoa*). As Frazer states,

The separation of the sexes begins at a very early age. Young boys are introduced to the men's house (*bi'u*) soon after they are weaned, through as special rite (*fa'amemengoa*), part of the purpose of which is to instil into the young child certain male specific qualities and attributes given a high value in later adult life. From that early age male children move between the two domains of activity represented in the men's house, where they normally sleep with the men of the settlement, and the family house, where food is prepared and families usually gather in the evenings. As the child grows up he is incorporated even more closely and responsibly in the activities and affairs associated with the male domain; attending feasts and rituals; playing the pan-pipes; joining informal dances; and just sitting around in the company of other men, chewing betel nut, smoking and talking. By the time of adolescence, boys are now capable of playing a full part in this side of hamlet life. (Frazer 1981:172-173)

During this rite a special mixture is prepared and applied to the mouth of the child and to other part of the body. Each of the ingredients is associated with special qualities. They include ginger and lime which are supposed to make a child quick-tempered and aggressive, and promote a tough and assertive personality. Other ingredients, taken from special trees and shrubs, instill the ability to persuade and influence people through oratory and help to develop powers of understanding and intelligence. On each occasion of this rite it is not expected that all children develop the same character and personality.

Invariably different individuals come to exhibit the two kinds of qualities mentioned separately. Hence one person may become tough to the point of being a fierce fighter (Ramo) while, another, may be conciliatory, (a leader, with the ability to learn, persuade, and organize people) (Frazer 1981:173).

For a girl, when her breast starts to grow (which socially is regarded as the beginning of puberty), she is prepared to go through a ritual known as *oko*, the colouring of her teeth to turn black: a process involves mixing of some special black stones only found in certain parts of Malaita with some leaves of a tree called *areko* in the To'abaita language. Once it is coloured the whole teeth turn black, and it becomes permanent. This is to allow the girl to eat taro. Taro is a staple crop and valuable in To'abaita culture; taro is the main food in the traditional events such as *mama* (mortuary feast), marriage, funeral, etc. If she did not go through the *oko* ritual, she will not be allowed to eat taro, and go into the taro garden plants belong to their family. This ritual also involves feasting, chanting, and the colouring of the teeth. The girl is growing and she has learned from her mother everything within the house and outside including building their own *pisi* (a hut built by women and girls for where they reside during their menstruation cycle), gardening, and household chores. For women, when they start their menstruation cycle, if it happens during the day, she will cook food for their children just outside the house but she never goes inside the house until sometime during the night when she will go and stay in the *pisi* until the end of her menstruation period. If menstruation starts during the night, she will get up and make sure the house is clean from her menstrual blood because if any blood is left behind, and anyone came and see it that means the house was defiled and it needs *fa'a abu kalia* (cleansing). This is the same as when a woman is about to give birth and if it happens that she left in the house any blood she will call her husband who resides in the *bi'u* (men's house) to tell him that the house was defiled and for him and other men and boys not to enter the house.

Young boys are guided by the stories that are told by men and boys as *u'unua i bi'u* (stories told in the men's house). These are stories about their *akalimae* (ancestors), *talisibaraa* (genealogies), *foa'a* (prayer), *sulagwaua* (histories), *ainimae* (chants), *ramoa* (aggressiveness), *ilu* (magic), and everything inside the men's house (*matala, ifi'itafua, ra'uma, wa'i akalo*). They are told to be competitive, aggressive, independent, and protective of their family members. This is the concept of *ramoa*. They are also told about their shrines, taboo sites, land,

and properties, and everything that constitute a good and respectable person (*wane inoto/wane gwaungai*). As one of the interview subject states,

In our custom, male and female are different in how they live. Today due to Christianity, male and female no longer live like in the past. In heathen (*ukita*) times, when our culture and *kastom* is not yet disturbed, men have their own house (*bi'u*) and women and girls lived in the family/dwelling house (*luma*). In my time in heathen (*ukita*), men and boys came only to eat, after eating they went back to their own house (*bi'u*). Men came and sit on one side, and women on the other side, they do not just sit anywhere they wish or mixed up. During our time, we did not eat in plates or drink in kettles like today; we boiled our food, and refilled water for drinking in bamboos. Men's bamboo for drinking was marked and put on one side, whereas women's were not. After eating, we talked story on our plans for tomorrow, then men and boys went back to the men's house. In the morning around 5Am women and girls woke up to prepare our breakfast, men and boys also woke and sometimes they cooked their own food and see if they can help us preparing our meals, for example bounding of the taro etc. After eating, men and boys, women and girls went out gardening, everyone worked together as a family (Suru, personal interview, July 30, 2018).

Boys and men are taught social norms regarding relationships between men and women, boys and girls, brothers and sister, father and son, mother and son, mother and daughter and relationships with others. For example, boys are taught to respect their sisters, mother and father. These relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding of the roles that everyone plays in society. As one of the interviewees states,

Women and girls are highly respected in the past. Men and boys could not sit together or hold each other's hands. It is taboo in *kastom*. Women and girls make sure they keep their men and boys from getting sick, eating from unclean food, drinking unclean water, or offering unclean pigs to their gods. They avoid this by not getting close contact with men and boys. Women and girls are powerful their power did not come from the spirits. Their power lies within themselves, if they execute these power within them, men and boys will suffer tremendously and die, they will fail in inter-tribal wars, be unsuccessful in *mama* (mortuary feasting), and *fa'asua foa'a* (prayers will be ruined/defile) (Saki, personal interview, July 24, 2018).

This is true to what Narokobi (1980:71) have said about women in Melanesia. He states, Woman is sacred. She is the symbol of peace. She cannot be killed or touched and she may walk in freedom through enemy territory. The killing of a woman or a child is so serious an offence that it may lead to generations of enmity, or an all-out effort to exterminate the village responsible for the death of a woman.

On the other hand, girls are guided by the stories known as *u'unua i luma* (stories told in the family/dwelling house). These stories are practiced as part of their everyday life. They were

told to be humble, obedient, and respectable. Women and girls make sure the house is in order, food is prepared, pigs are fed, children are taken care of, water is fetched, and the garden is clean. They make sure the family is in order. Women and girls are taught by the parents about who their relatives were and how to treat people with respect show forth the quality of a good woman.

From birth till adulthood people learn how to raise their family and how to interact with each other in their everyday life. A man is taught everything that is expected of him as an adult, especially how to raise a family. The same applies for a woman. She is told of how to treat her husband, raise her family, and performs her roles and responsibilities in society. It begins before a man and a woman got married. A man is told stories about marriage – *u'unua sula ro hai kwaina*. The same for a woman: she is taught everything about the expectations of society in marriage. They were taught how to solve problems, adapt to one another, especially to the groom's family, how to raise their children; keep their family, and their relationships with others.

According to those interviewed for this study, these stories are marginalized now-a-days: the present day generation has no longer taught these stories. Consequently, when they marry, they do not know how to raise their family leading to men blaming women for all the problems inside the family and community and women blaming men for their suppression and exclusion from society. In traditional To'abaita society, women were not excluded from important social matters. They were the pillars in To'abaita society, the foundation and core of the family and their place in society is respected because the lives of men depend on the women and girls. The men's name is uplifted as a result of all that is done by the wife or women and girls in the family, clan and tribes. Similarly, Roger Keesing's account of the Kwaio men and women shared similar sentiments to that of To'abaita. He said, whereas men 'depict themselves as active agents in maintaining relations with the ancestors (through sacrifice, prayer, and ritual), Kwaio women often depict themselves as custodians of virtue, the moral keystones of their tiny settlements' (Keesing 1987:37).

The few days before the date of marriage are an important time for the bride and the bridegroom. It is when the bride's parents and relatives would get together and talk with and advise her before she leaves their home to live with her husband. The same applies to the bridegroom. Two days before marriage (*bongi momousua*) is for *ainimae* (traditional chants) and

preparations for the marriage. Those who advice the bride and the bridegroom on the day before marriage were not ordinary people; they possess special skills on advice (*kwaifamanataia*) who were known and respected in the society. These are mostly elderly women and men who know the stories and understand how a husband and wife raise a new family. The bride listens carefully to these stories and advices, and she takes them on board. The same applies to the bridegroom.

Today, People no longer tell the bride and bridegroom these stories. They do not know how to begin a family. The bride no longer hears any stories or advices about how to live with the bridegroom's family. There is no proper guidance in marriage in To'abaita societies nowadays. The stories that are taught to teach the bride and bridegroom how to live as a family are no longer in place. Inside the advice, the bride and the bridegroom learn about each other's cultures, livelihood, and way people live and interact with each other. One of the interviewees for this research outlines the kinds of issues covered in these conversations:

Marriage is creating relationships; treat your mother and father in-laws with respect. When they talk, never talk back. Follow what they tell you to do. Follow your husband. You are a woman now – act and behave like a woman. Treat your husband with respect, listen and obey him. Never swear at your husband or your in-laws. Be kind to everyone. Men also respect your wife, treat her with respect, listen to her and obey what she likes from you. Do your responsibility as a man. You are no longer a young man. Act and behave like a married man. Treat each other with respect (Saki, personal interview, July 24, 2018).

The bridegroom's family would come with the bride prices and give it to the bride's family on the day of marriage. An Oxfam report (2018) said that bride prices are escalating, and has contributes towards increasing domestic violence. In the past, bride prices are based on mutual understanding and relationships. Whatever the bridegroom's party gives for the bride's family, the bride's party has respect for it and accepts them. They do not charge each other on bride prices. What was important to them is that relationship that was created through marriages. Today the practice of bride payments have been abused and commoditized, which then affects most of the families today (Saki, personal interview, July 24, 2018).

On the day the bride leaves her family, the bride's family will have their final conversations with her. When they have this conversation, the bride's family gives one or more traditional shell money for the bride for different purposes based on what is said when giving the bride the gifts. These are based on what the bride's family members say during the day of the

payment of the bride price mostly re-emphasizing what was taught in the family and as well as for other purposes such as gift for starting her family or to help her when she is in need.

The bride moves to her husband's home, others also follow the bride to the bridegroom's family, and they stayed for days even a month (*kwaibetaia*). A few days after the wedding, when everyone has left the newly wedded husband and wife, the bridegroom's parents will take the two new couple with them to show them their properties: land, garden, water, ngali nut, bamboo, bread fruit, coconut, betel nut, and everything that the two of them will use or have access to and to look after in order to begin their new family.

After marriage, the bride and bridegroom will talk about building a house. According to kastom, it is best for the new couple to live separately in their own house. The purpose is for the new couple to combine the stories they were taught before they got married and to get to understand each other better. According to To'abaita kastom, men are the heads of the house and women are the foundation of the house. So it is the men who will begin the story and take the lead in the discussion between them. According to Bila'u, the husband will begin the story like this:

I welcome you into my life and into my family, "I will make sure the two of us stay together, support each other, and work together". The bride will respond by saying that "I have left my parents, brothers, sisters, and relatives and came to you, I will uplift your name one day if you continue to love me and support me." The husband and wife talk nicely between the two of them, the two make sure they live as husband and wife, support each other, respect one another, and listen to each other (Bila'u, personal interview, April 04, 2018).

When the husband and wife move and live together in their separate home, it is called *lumafono*. This is a term that literary means, "time for the new couple to put their minds, hearts, and stories together behind closed doors." This allows the two to '*nanai ambu*': the new couple to stay in their house, do not go to the garden, talk story about everything including gardening, farm pig, accumulating red shell money, and plan on having children. After discussing these, the husband and wife will adopt what has been discussed and will agree to follow accordingly. In their discussions, the two will; (i) talk about *ra la ana o'ola* (plans to make a garden to begin their new family); (ii) *too la ana wela* (plan to have children); (iii) *thare bothoa* (plan to feed

pigs) to secure the family or protect the family when need arise; and, (iv) plan to accumulate traditional shell money (*totodaa*) to support the family.

The construction of gender in traditional To'abaita society is rooted within the family since early childhood till adulthood. However, over the years the traditional To'abaita society evolves, and family structures shifted, gender division of labour changes, and the power relations between men and women, boys and girls are becoming complex. The construction of gender in the contemporary To'abaita society is no longer determined by To'abaita or kastom alone. Rather, it is constructed by schools, churches, social media, peers, employment, changing environment, and so forth. Therefore it is challenging to deal with gender issues within the contemporary societies, because individuals, families, and communities have responds to gender differently, and challenging gender means challenging the whole social structures and other forms of inequalities including class, race, ethnicity, status, and so forth (see Kabeer 2003; Mosse 1993).

Household division of labour in traditional To'abaita society: Wane Na Gwauna Tooa, Kini Na Kwatona Tooa

There is no life without the heart. Without the heart there is no brain or head to lead and to make decisions. It is similar to a tree, where without the root there was no tree. The term '*wane na gwauna tooa*' means that a man is the head of the household. '*Kini na Kwatona tooa*', on the other hand refers to the fact that the woman is the mainstay, the foundation, heart, blood life, root, and core of the household/family. This means: women are the major players within the family as they are everything which keeps the family together, growing and lively. Women give birth to children, and bath, breastfeed and mouth feed the child. During the nights the mother protects the child from cold and harm, and sleeps together with her arms around the child. When the child cries, the mother wipes its tears, sings lullabies, and makes sure the child stops crying and is comforted. The mother communicates with the child every day. Everything that keeps the family intact is founded by women such as garden, pig, bamboo nuts, traditional shell money, costumes etc. Keesing (1987:46) observes similar pattern in Kwaio. He said 'the center of the Kwaio social world lies not in the men's house at the upper margins of the clearing but in the dwelling house...' which in To'abaita it is controlled by the women.

In traditional To'abaita society, men and boys reside in the *bi'u* (men's house) and women and girls reside in the *luma* (family/dwelling house). The men become head of the house because they have the role and responsibility to pray for the family (*tooa*), clan (*bi'u wane*) and tribe (*kwalafaa*) against harm, illness, deaths, and *akalo ta'a ki* (bad spirits). He oversees everyone in the family or clan, make decision, and he protects and defends the family. Women on the other hand are the core of the family. They are the mainstay of the To'abaita society. Men's lives depend on women. Keesing (1987:38) witnesses similar experience in Kwaio where "if women did not live properly, anyone will die."

Discussions on daily operations of the family occur inside the dwelling house (*luma*) between the husband and wife, before the husband would pass on what is discussed to the men and boys in the men's house (*bi'u*). Bila'u agreed that men and women need each other, but cannot be equal because men as head and women as the mainstay or heart are two different roles that were culturally constructed and being practiced in the society for decades. However, in reality it was all mutual, collaborative, and inclusive discussion and decision between men and women in the traditional To'abaitan society. Being men as the head does not mean women are suppressed or marginalized in To'abaita society.

Some of the men and women who participate in the interviews are very critical of the concept of 'men as household heads and women as the mainstay of the house' because it is impossible for the head to exist without the heart or body, "a tree may grow healthy, bearing good fruits, with green leaves and colourful flowers, but without the root, it cannot live. If its roots are not strong, the tree would not withstand cyclones and strong winds" (Bila'u, personal interview, April 22, 2018). As one of the interviewees points out,

Traditionally, it is standard that men are the head of the house and women are everything in the family. Today people fail to play their roles and responsibilities as husband and wife that is why it caused a lot of problem and complaints. Men as the head does not mean, men are the boss it simply means women uplift men's name, and men make decisions based on consensus understanding. Men always listen to women and discuss together because men's lives depend on them and vice-versa for women. It is a mutual support between men and women. Today this concept is interpreted differently as to men as the boss (Fali, personal interview, April 30, 2018).

Apart from being the heart of the household, women and girls also possess power that can be wielded to bring suffering and destroy men and boys. In a fight or quarrel between a group of

men or boys, women have the power to intervene and calming the situation. Men and boys will listen to women. Upon marriage, a woman moves to stay with her husband in his village. But women also connect and create relationships with other tribes, clans and families through marriage. Women give birth to and nurture the next generation. A man's life depends solely on women in the Traditional To'abaita society (similar to Keesing 1987, Kwaio women).

This is similar to other parts of Melanesia. In his collection of writings in the book *The Melanesian Way*, Papua New Guinean scholar and writer, Bernard Narokobi (1980: 72) states that,

The women is like the fountain...she is the source...she is the mother, the creator. A man is either made or destroyed by the woman: she may choose if there should be a new life; she may take the herbs to prevent pregnancy; she may prevent a child from surviving after birth; she may prevent her husband from becoming generous; she may adopt any children and provide meals for other children. The woman who knows her husband well may do a variety of things to make or destroy him.

The research participants affirmed that men and boys in traditional To'abaita society did not look down on women but they respect women because women and girls save their lives. Their lives depend on them, and they did not want to ruin their men's life because ruining men and boy's lives is also ruining women's and girls' lives. It is a mutually supporting relationship, rather than a suppressive one as is often depicted in Western discourses about gender relationships in traditional societies.

But, there is lament that things have changed. Bila'u, one of those interviewed states that,

Today people did not know about each other's position. In the past people know each other's position. The point is, today people did not know each other's position that is why when women speak, and men turn to look down on them. In the past people know each other's position. So when they speak men support, listen and respect them (Bila'u, personal interview, April 22, 2018) (also see Akin 2003 on Kwaio women)

It is obvious from that although gender relationships in To'abaita is not the same as the conventional western definition of gender equality, relationships between men and women is, traditionally, mutually beneficial in order to create a harmonious society. It is not an unequal relationship. This equality embodied in the concepts of *wane na gwauna tooa* (man as the head of the household) and *kini na kwatona tooa* (woman as the foundation, pillar and core of the family) and To'abaita society.

In terms of decision-making, women also made decision, especially about household chores, and men make most of the decision related to the overall wellbeing of the family. However, most of the decision within the family were collaborative and involve both husband and wife, especially those regarding their livelihoods and everyday practices and interactions. Even though men make most of the decision, in traditional To'abaita society they listen to the voice of their women. This concept of men was the head of the household and women being anchored as household chores is often misrepresented today as men being the boss and women having no place in decision-making. Today this concept had moved from the household domain and has blended into developmental spheres where men often are the front lines in attending workshops, facilitating community programs, leading the discussions in meetings, and often the decision makers within the family, communities, and at the national level. The misinterpretation of this concept 'man the head of the house' has led to certain degrees of male domination today within the family, community, and to the national level. Moore (2017:285) said "[a]lthough the state limited some previous social mechanisms that ensured male control (warfare, for instance), *kastom* has incorporated other changes that exacerbate women's indebtedness to men." The interception and push-pull relationship between *kastom* and modern life styles have led to the creation of new unequal gender roles and expectations today.

***Gender relations between men, women, boys and girls in traditional To'abaita society:
Women and men taboos***

Traditionally in To'abaita, women and men are respected in the society. This is reflected in the words one used while talking with a woman or a man. Example a man avoids facing a woman during conversation, eye contact is avoided, and where a woman is sitting men could not sit next to her. It is taboo to walk over a woman, men, boys and girl's leg. The uses of obscene words are forbidden. Holding hands, hugs and hand shaking are not traditionally practiced. When a woman is alone at home, men and boys will avoid her house. The traditional taboos set boundaries to relationships between men and women, boys and girls within families, communities and tribes. Woven into these relationships are roles and responsibilities that one is expected to perform on a daily basis.

The table below (table 3) shows some balance and imbalances amongst men, women, girls, and boys. These are few amongst the many I came across during the course of the study. It

is interesting to see how relationships are guided by traditional gender taboos in the past compared to today.

Table 3. Women, men, boys and girls taboos

Gender taboos	Men	Women	Girls	Boys
Walk over someone's leg	Men's leg is taboo for women and girls to walk over	Women's leg is taboo for men and boys to walk over	Girl's leg is taboo for men and boys to walk over.	Boy's leg is taboo for women and girls to walk over
Head	Men's head was taboo and cannot be touch by women/girls	Women's head was taboo and cannot be touch by men/boys	Girls' head was taboo and cannot be touch by men/boys	Boy's head was taboo and cannot be touch by women/girls
Walking together	It is culturally right for men and boys to go together	It is culturally right for women and girls to go together	Girls keep distance or avoid walking together with their brothers	Boys keep distance or avoid walking together with their sisters
Approaching a house	Men shout out. If only women and girls are at home he avoids going to the house	Women shout out. If only men and boys are at home she avoids going to the house	Usually girls do not go alone they often go with their mother	Boys shout out. If only women and girls are at home he avoids going to the house
Giving	Men and boys avoid giving things directly in the hands of women and girls.	Women and girls avoid giving things directly in the hands of men and boys	Girls avoid giving things directly in the hands of boys and men	Boys avoid giving things directly in the hands of girls and women.
Standing while talking	Men and boys avoid facing women	Women and girls avoid facing men	Girls and boys facing each other is okay	Boys and girls facing each other is okay
Eye contact while talking	Men and boys avoid eye contact with women	Women and girls avoid eye contact with men	Girls and boys eye contact is okay	Boys and girls eye contact is okay
Sitting	Men avoid sitting next to women and girls	Women avoid sitting next to men and boys	Girls and boys avoid sitting next to each other	Boys and girls avoid sitting next to each other
Overhead/tree	Women avoid going	Men avoid going	Girls going underneath the	Boys and men avoid going

	underneath the tree once men and boys ontop	underneath the tree once women/girls ontop	tree once men/boys ontop is okay	underneath the tree once girls/women ontop
Muu'a (Ex)	Men avoid talking, seeing or meeting his Ex	Women avoid talking, seeing, or meeting her Ex	Girls and boys are accompanied by women when dating	Boys and girls are accompanied by women when dating
Menstruation	Men avoid women and girls during menstruation	Women avoid men and boys during menstruation.	Girls avoid men and boys during menstruation.	Boys avoid women and girls during menstruation
Foa'a (Prayer)	Only men can pray	Women do not pray expect women's prayer	Girls do not offer prayer	Boys are taught about prayer
Men's house (Bi'u)	For men and boys only	Women not allowed	Girls not allowed	Boys and men only
Family/dwelling house (Luma)	Men can visit but not sleep there	Women and girls live there	Girls and women live there	Boys can visit but do not sleep there
Fa'a memengoa	For men and boys only	Not for women and girls	Not for Girls and women	Boys and men only
Oko (colouring the teeth into black)	Not for Men and boys	Women and girls only	Girls and women only	Not for boys and men
Swearing and use of obscene word (thama, thaina, daidaia, basi, Ramoa etc)	Taboo for women, girls, and boys to swear at men	Taboo for men, boys and girls to swear at women	Taboo for men, boys, and women to swear at girls	Taboo for men, women and girls to swear at boys
Others Taboos	Taboo for men and boys to walk over women's rope, basket, home umbrella, smoke, water, food etc	Taboo for men and boys to walk over women's basket, home umbrella, smoke, water, food, etc	It is okay to cross/walk over girls' basket, rope, and home umbrella.	Women and girls avoid crossing over boys basket, food, home umbrella etc.

These traditional gender boundaries are marginalized today but many of the practices are still followed. After conversion to Christianity most of these practices were seen inappropriate today. Abandoning of these traditional gender boundaries has resulted to changes in the whole social structures that governed these relationships between men and women, boys and girls within the families, and communities in To'abaita. These changes bring new meanings for

women and men, boys and girls as to who was responsible for what and their relationships with each other in the contemporary society. Whilst the push for economic development is a top agenda in contemporary society, there is much confusion regarding gender and gender inequalities, domination, power, and status in the rural areas. Narokobi (1980:63) said, “Today we Melanesians stand on the cross roads. More than any people in the world, we can choose. We can choose to be the West and the East or we can choose to be ourselves in our philosophy, our life-styles and our whole beings.” However, whatever the society is, everyone deserves to be respected and treated fairly.

The changing nature of To’abaita society

One evening I came back after an interview with another community member. It was dark and I couldn’t see clearly. As I came closer, a man in his 40s or early 50s was crossing the road. I saw him but I couldn’t identify who he was. So I moved to one side of the road to allow him by pass. But he also moved to the same side of the road while walking towards me. I wonder what he wanted, so I stood still. I heard sound of something moving against the wind, then I saw him swinging long bush knife as he moved closer to me. I was scared so I spoke. “Hey,” I said. He responded, “son.” I recognized his voice. He was not my biological father, but he was from the community. He was drunk. He said,

“I heard you have gone overseas to study,” He said.

“Yes” I said still wondering what he wanted. He continued talking about how we were related. He then asked me to buy him cigarette.

Just like any other society, To’abaita society is constantly changing. As the above story indicates the changes are not always positive. Alcohol has become a major problem in the community. Traditional To’abaita values, currency, food, material goods, etc. have been by new ones that are often referred to as modern life styles (Frazer 1981; also see Moore 2017 ‘Making Mala’). Frazer (1981) in his study of the To’abaita society provides detailed accounts of the To’abaita people’s traditional ways of life and how that was changing over time, especially with the introduction of Christianity, a centralized government, To’abaita’s people’s migration to towns, new material goods, cash economy, etc. He referred to Hogbin’ anthropological work in Malaita in 1933 as a point of reference with the To’abaita people (see Hogbin 1939). Hogbin (1939) highlighted three most important attributes of changes stemmed from commercial

enterprises, Christian Missionaries, and the British Administration. Although Frazer's and Hogbin's studies were done more than three and seven decades ago respectively, the issues about changes and its impacts on To'abaita society are still relevant.

Frazer (1981) also discussed the out migration of To'abaita people to the Solomon Islands national capital, Honiara, and other parts of the country. Frazer notes that To'abaita people who migrated to work on Guadalcanal and in other parts of Solomon Islands were mostly men and boys, while women stayed at home to take care of the children. Today, the trend has changed: men, women, boys and girls all make up the population of people migrating out from To'abaita in search of opportunities. The trend has increased dramatically over the years. The difference is that, unlike in the past when people migrated out mostly to work in plantations both in Solomon Islands and overseas (Australia and Fiji), most now find other forms of employment. More recently, some To'abaita people have participated in the seasonal workers scheme in Australia and New Zealand. Many of the migrants do circular migration, going back and forth between their village and Honiara several times a year. Some left home with their families and have never returned to their villages. Others visit their village only during Christmas and other holidays. Many families have raised their children in town and have lost touch with rural To'abaita livelihood. The rural to urban push is at an alarming rate. The lack of opportunities in the rural areas may have contributed to this flow of migrants into the urban centers, especially to Guadalcanal.

Regardless of the influx of migrants into town, many families continue to live in the villages in To'abaita. They participate in the everyday chores of cultivating food, fishing, making copra, cocoa, and selling produces such as betel nuts, fish, local foods, and other items including baked flour, cigarettes, and home tobacco (Safu), either in the village, or at markets along the main road that runs the island, and or at the provincial sub-station at Malu'u. Some also operate fuel depots, transport services, and canteens that sell products purchased from the Chinese shops in Auki.

Most people in rural To'abaita have now built and live in permanent houses, although some still dwell in their sago palm-thatched roof. Furthermore, number of schools continues to increase, homestay accommodations, retail shops run by the locals, and individual family struggles for changes. In Malu'u provincial sub-station, there is a permanent market house

funded by community sector program, the Solomon Power office in Malu'u managing the Malu'u power station, police station, agriculture office, clinic and other government facilities that needs to be promoted and improve for better economic development outcomes. Over the years some developments also broke, currently there are no Chinese shops in Malu'u, they pulled out some years back, the copra shed, butchery, soap and milling factory ceased, the fisheries project collapsed, the Malu'u nursing school is out of operation, and other planned development for the region are still to happen such as the Kadabina development project. Recently early this year 2019 the construction of a new road linking to the inland communities of Faumalefo, Gwaiu, Defu, Aekafo, Afoa and other hamlet of villages within the road's vicinity was appreciated by the people even though it is yet to be completed.

Based on first-hand information, those interviewed have explained that some changes pose threat to the communities such as increasing population with limited space and over crowdedness. Consequently, there are situations where families compete for space to build their homes. Such competitions for land could, and have in some cases, led to conflicts and violence. Along the coastal areas houses and villages started moving in land due to limited spaces or expansion of villages. Communities and families often experience disputes over places for gardening due to increasing population over the years, and because of that land for gardening is becoming scarce and limited, soil infertility is becoming problematic due to over cultivation of the soil and climatic changes, others have to walk far distance up the hills to find suitable land for gardening (example see Jones et al. 2014; Allen et al. 2006).

As a result of these, many villagers have become dependent on goods from the shops available in Auki, Malu'u, and in the village canteens for their daily meals usually rice, tinned fish, and noodles. These replace most of the traditional To'abaita foods such as taro, yam, sweet potatoes, cabbages, and so forth. This is evident in the communities during feasts, marriages, deaths, and church anniversaries that rice, tinned fish/meat, and noodles are the most dominant foods, this is because it is easy to carry, fast to cook, and can afford to feed hundreds of people during occasions as such. Not only during huge gatherings and events, but it has also become popular as household meals. This pose health risks to the present and future generations (example see Joelle 2017; Jones et al 2014; Andersen et al. 2013).

The interviewees in the communities where this research was carried out have highlighted that in the past two decades, the impacts of climate change have also become evident. In To'abaita the impacts of climate change have been on food production and the productivity of cocoa and coconut plantations including extreme weather patterns. The decline in the production of root crops such as taro, yam, sweet potatoes, etc. by inland communities affects trade and batter systems with coastal communities. Inland communities also find it hard to grow taro and other local crops compared to the past as they are the main suppliers of taro to the coastal villages. Studies in To'abaita to show these are still lacking. Yet these are some of the issues that are highlighted by the community members based on reality of what is happening in To'abaita. Fishing communities experience reduction in fish catch over the years due to over fishing. Specific studies on these in To'abaita are needed. However, community members have confirmed that fish is lacking today and the reefs are no longer productive for fishing and gleaning. As a result people opted for imported processed foods (example Jones et al. 2014; Andersen et al. 2013; Allen et al. 2006).

The influx of Christianity has also had tremendous impact in To'abaita. There are various Christian denominations, including the South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC), Anglican (Church of Melanesia), Catholic, Baptist, Jehovah's Witness, Assemblies of God (AOG), Church of the Living Word, and a few belonging to the Bahai faith. Churches are becoming part of the village and community set ups, villages exist with church affiliations (see Ian Frazer 1981). In the early days of Christianity, Christian Churches were one of the forces that brought people from the inland to the coasts. They set up Christian villages (also see Frazer 1981; Moore 2017). Over the years, the churches grew. Each year churches celebrate their anniversaries. Example every year, celebrations were held on 14th July to mark the anniversary of the arrival of the gospel at Malu'u, To'abaita on the 14th July 1894. Christianity has had a huge impact on To'abaita society. During my study, this has been highlighted as one of the greatest agents of change.

More recently, there was an emergence of a local Christian movement known as the 'Estate Movement' in To'abaita. The Estate Movement known to be a community based approach implemented by a local church minister Rev. Michael Maelia'u in the mid-2000. One can trace the Estate Movement as the product of the Deep Sea Canoe Vision of 1986 by Rev.

Michael Maelia'u (Maeliau 2006). It is a vision showing the map of the world with specific instructions aimed at manifesting the glory of the Lord. The vision grows into "The Deep Sea Canoe Movement" in the Solomon Islands. A prayer movement believes the vision to be true. The "Deep Sea Canoe Movement" further developed into collective actions aimed at developing the total wellbeing of people including the "Family Tree Approach", an approach stated that "once the "Family Tree" is set, development will happen (see Saeni 2008), and the "Estate Movement", the movement belief that, "when the heart is right, the action will be right" (see Faiau 2013). Through collective actions the movement mobilized activities, actions, and beliefs which maintain the movement's continuity over the years.

Many interviewees reiterated on lotu (Christianity) as having great impacts in To'abaita society. Christianity paves the way for developments and changes to families, communities, and individual lives. It comes with education, colonialism, new laws, understanding of the world, life style, responsibilities, and relationships within the communities and families. As one of the interviewees, Saki states,

Our society changes because of Abuofa. Abuofa brought the gospel (*God Otaoa*) from Queensland in Australia to To'abaita. He arrived in Malu'u on the 14th July 1894 at *Aethawanekao*. Abuofa Christianized the whole of To'abaita region, men and women, boys and girls abandon the mountains (pagan - *Ukita*) and followed him. The gospel shut down pagan practices (*ka fonoa lalo ni ta'e ki sui*), ancestral prayers were abandoned (*Foa'a ki ka teo*), sacrificial fires died out (*Era ba ka Mae*), it becomes barren and are grown with thorns and tress (*ka rogi angofia, ka bira ani akwa*), and it becomes difficult to hold on to or to maintain (*keka raoia si to'o, ka kwai ikesi*) (Saki, personal interview, July 24, 2018) (also see Abu'ofa's account in Moore 2017).

According to Frazer (1981:61) "It was Christianity and the influence of Christian missionaries which was a major factor in bringing about large-scale resettlement of the island from inland areas to the coast. By 1970, nearly 80 percent of the To'abaita people were living within two kilometres of the coast, mostly clustered into large village type settlements, each identified with one of several Christian sects represented in the area". This was reiterated in the course of this study by one of those interviewed:

Christianity brings people to the coast, it changes everything from within the tribes and families, and it set up villages and communities based on churches or denominations. It fosters differences based on churches and denominations. People discriminate one another based on church affiliations regardless of their tribal affiliations (Diu'a, personal interview, July 30, 2018).

Apart from Christianity, many of those interviewed for this study identified western education as another agent of change in To'abaita society. In the early days of formal western education, males were given the priority to attend schools. Women's place was seen as being at home. Nowadays, things have changed. Both male and female have a relatively equal opportunity to formal education. In fact, formal education has become a priority for many families in To'abaita. Parents give priority to ensuring that their sons and daughters have access to formal western education. As an agent of change, formal western education, has impacted, not only individuals, but also entire communities. It has also contributed to improvements in socio-economic livelihoods, and to shifts in household division of labor and gender relations. Frazer (1981) states that, schooling gradually directed people to different path of development from the pagan. Today education is becoming everybody's business and concern in the families and communities in To'abaita. As Magali states, "today education is at our footsteps, children born today, they born straight inside the schools. Education change the way we look at things, it changes people's lives within the tribes, communities and families" (Magali, personal interview, April 29, 2018).

Besides education, those interviewed for this study said that money (economic forces) generates changes in To'abaita today (also see Frazer 1981; Moore 2017). As one of the interviewees states,

You have money you can do anything. You have money you can build a nice house for your family, you have money you can buy food for your children, you have money you can buy your children's school fees, you have money you can help your other brother when in need, you have money you can host a feast, you have money nothing is impossible. Money brings both good and bad things in our society, community and families in To'abaita today.

Those interviewed for this study also highlighted that accessibility to services such as transport, communication, health, education also contributed to changes in To'abaita. Access to these services altered people's lives and how they relate to one another in their everyday interactions. As Gwara states,

Access to road makes it possible for people in the rural communities to travel to town. It also help facilitates products from town and city life to reach the rural communities. Access to communication also facilitates changes in our places. It helps communication easier for the rural dwellers. Today many in the rural areas spent too much on face book or social media. Students especially spent limited time to do their study. The little money

one earns, the first thing to think of is top up (communication bills). Others ended up with family breakdown, compensation, argument, and so forth. Access to these services brings both good and bad things into the rural communities (Gwara, personal interview, June 12, 2018).

Some have also stated that the establishment of formal laws have also contributed to changes in To'abaita. These laws were introduced by the British colonial administration when they took control of the Solomon Islands (Read Judith Bennett's *Wealth of the Solomons* (1987). The importance of the introduced western laws was highlighted by Bila'u during this study:

When law first introduced in our society is not easy. Our people were killed by our own local soldiers employed by British at that time. The soldiers were led by our headman and gun fired *Aitoli* in the past. Law is powerful, it calms our society today, and it changes our lives, and shapes how we do things and interact in our society today (Bila'u, personal interview, April 22, 2018).

These changes continue to evolve over time, the mortuary feasting (mama) no longer practice, and ancestral shrines were abandoning, the process of early childhood to adulthood socialization changes, and the household division of labour shifted. This brings us to the next section on the household division of labour in contemporary To'abaita society.

Changing household division of labour in To'abaita

The To'abaitan society is different today compared to the past two or three decades. The question remains what is it like inside the family in response to these changes? Let us see how the household division of labour in To'abaita is different today.

Informants commented on the social changes that have taken place, saying that men and women, boys and girls are moving away from the traditional ways that are regulated by family and tribal units. This also means changes to the division of labour within households.

Traditionally women and men knew their roles and responsibilities and what are expected of them within the families and communities. However, today the household gendered norms, roles and responsibilities have changed with the changing society. In an interview with Isofa, she expressed,

Today, the society is no longer standard as of the past, it is complex, and people are confused with their roles and responsibilities. Women and girls also acquire higher education with high qualifications. They work in offices, get paid, and support their family. Today some men who did not attain higher education and qualifications become adhered to their female counter part who works for the government. Things have changed today (Isofa, personal interview, May 16, 2018).

Division of labour in traditional To'abaita society is more task-specific than what families have experience today. Today, the household division of labour shifts from task-specific to diverse and multiple tasks performed by members of the society. These shifts in household division of labour have altered the traditional gender norms, roles, and expectations in the family and community. Diu'a describes household division of labour today as complex. "I think there is a much clearer understanding between men and women, and boys and girls in the past compared to today. Today everything is not in order; it's all messed up" (Diu'a, personal interview, July 30, 2018).

Fali further expressed that due to these shifts in traditional gender norms, roles and expectations, men and women can perform work perceived to be men's job and vice versa for men doing women's job (also see Lawless and Teioli 2015). In the traditional To'abaita society men and women are not unequal but they are different in their roles and responsibilities. Fali spoke of, "Today men and boys, women and girls can work on roles and responsibilities that are traditionally assigned for men and boys and vice versa for women and girls doing work perceived to be men's spheres of influence" (Fali, personal interview, April 30, 2018).

Men and women work hand-in-hand with one another in everything in the traditional To'abaita society. Men and boys help women and girls at home, especially with cutting and collecting fire woods, making sure the house has no leaks, children, women and girls are safe, and are protected. If they see women and girls are busy with other things men and boys can take the responsibility of looking after the kids, feeding the pigs or making fire, and they keep occupied all the time, and they are sensitive about everything when there is a need to help they respond exactly in time. Suru stress, "Today this is no longer the practice; most men stayed at home doing nothing while their women went to the garden every day and doing all the household chores from cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water, and feeding the children" (Suru, personal interview, July 30, 2018).

Kalua a participant in the research argues that in traditional To'abaita society men live to what is expected of them. Today it is different, what is expected of men has changed leading to the abuse of power by them over women. Frazer (1981:73) said, "Christianity can be seen in terms of qualities and values associated with women, representing a weak and passive way of life

unfitting for men” (Frazer 1981:73: also see Moore 2017). Simply in the To’abaita language: *wane ka kinila na’a* (what is expected of man changes). Ben Burt (1994 in Moore 2017:284) has shared similar sentiments saying that “Malaitans interpreted Christianity as the arrival of a female ancestor or spirit....Christianity broke and abolished women’s taboos.”

The shifting household division of labour has leads to exposing of family to all kinds of influences from infidelity, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, lack of respect in society, and so forth. In other words, the changes in traditional gender norms, roles, and expectation however give more flexibility to both men and women in contemporary society. Women and men’s taboos are deteriorated leading to all kinds of gender issues. Faukwa’i illustrates,

Boys drunk, girls drunk, women drunk, men drunk, young people drunk, everyone got drunk; they did not have manners today. Men married get divorce married another woman left her with one or more children, the same for women. Young girls do married to married man, and young boys get married to married woman. This is not the case in traditional To’abaita society. These happen because of outside influence, which deteriorates the family cores (Faukwa’i, personal interview, July 18, 2018).

Saki further explains,

The strong traditional practices of respecting women and men, boys and girls are weakening today. Men and women, boys and girls treat each other the same. Although some aspects of culture are still practiced today, it is weakening. Men swore at women, women swore at men, brother swore at her sister, sister swore back at his brother etc. These are never the case in the past. Respect for each other is upheld in families in the past. Today even lotu (Christianity) is strong; respect is lacking (Saki, personal interview, July 24, 2018).

Today most families no longer have the time to talk with their family members. They are alienated from their family and are too busy with so many things and have no time for *kwaifa’amanataia* (talking advices/stories) inside the family and community. Even parents talk to their children and family members, they did not listen, they disobey, which makes parents give up in their teachings at home. Others think they are educated than people back home and ignore *kwaifa’amanatia*. Some refer to lotu (Christianity) as source of advice. However, it did not work as expected because *kwaifa’amanataia* is different from lotu. *Kwaifa’amanataia* in kastom is being practice long before Christianity.

The shifts in household division of labour according to some of the interviews for this study claimed that husband and wife, men and women, and boys and girls need to adjust and adapt to these changes. According to the interviews there is still hope inside the family if husband and wife understand each other's position, roles and responsibilities, and respect each other, a value that people upheld in the To'abaita traditional society. These are illustrated in these following individual interviewees. Leleko is a house wife. She shared her experience as follows:

My husband is a teacher, he went during the day to teach, and after he came back he continues with his responsibility in building our house. He pays for our foods and all our needs, he attend meetings in the village, go for workshops, organize community works, meet with chiefs, and head our family. My responsibility is to take care of the household chores and our kids (Leleko, personal interview, May 30, 2018).

For Fofoloabe, it is her husband that takes the responsibilities of looking after the kids, and household activities since she works for the government. She said,

I am a teacher; my husband stayed at home looking after our kids. He can cook and do household chores as well, but I did not force him to do that, it is up to him. I did not complain about him if he did not do household chores, it is my role to cook our food, keep our children, wash our dirty clothes, dishes, and clean our house (Fofoloabe, personal interview, July 21, 2018).

Kalua's case is different since him and his wife both work for the government. Kalua's wife is a nurse and Kalua is a teacher. Both Kalua and his wife did not spent much time at home since the two of them are working for the government. Kalua said, "My wife and I find it difficult to keep up with our household activities and looking after the kids since both of us works for the government. Therefore we hire a house maid to take care of the household activities and our children" (Kalua, personal interview, July 30, 2018).

Kwairabu also shared similar experience to Kalua. However, it is different since Kalua and his husband were subsistence farmers. Both engaged in gardening and selling of betel nuts to support their family. Kwairabu shared her experience,

My husband and I do gardening together. My husband would cut down the big trees, clear the bush, and dug the soil into mounts, planting the taro, while I did the planting of sweet potatoes. Almost all work in the garden we did it together. Back at home, I did most of the household chores form cooking, cleaning, washing, and looking after our children, my husband would help with scraping the coconut, cutting the firewood, and feeding the pigs. My husband and I also engaged in selling betel nut, cigarette, and home

tobacco at the market, when my husband went to the market to sell our products, I will keep our children or went to the garden. If I went to the market; my husband will stay at home or go to the garden. Sometimes the two of us go together at the market selling our stuffs. We talk together about our plans (Kwairabu, personal interview, July 20, 20180).

Today in To'abaita, Solomon Islands, what is known in the past as mutual understanding, relationships and respect, and shared roles and responsibilities that are characteristics of the traditional societies still exists but are marginalized due to changes (social, cultural, political, and economic) that creates new gender roles and responsibilities, and unequal expectations in terms of power relations, domination, status, and so forth.

Conclusion

The long gone are the days where the stories that had governed the traditional To'abaita society will no longer exist. The stories (foa'a, sulagwaua, ainimae, talisibaraa, kwaifa'amanataia etc) that people are deeply attached to in their everyday life and practices, which makes them men and women, boys and girls are being deteriorated. In other words the To'abaitan way of life that functions around mutual support, respect and relationships are marginalized today. The giving up of these stories, especially stories about women's and men's taboos and *kwaifa'amanataia* (talking advice), *talisibaraa* (geneology) etc in To'abaitan society by its youths and future generations are contributing factors towards increasing gender issues and disparities in contemporary To'abaita societies.

FADs are an example how economic development influence gender in To'abaita. This brings us into the next chapter of this thesis on 'gender and economic development: the case of fish aggregating device in To'abaita.'

CHAPTER 6. GENDER AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: The case of the Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) in To'abaita

Introduction

There was a sacred island named 'Ramos' in the Solomon Islands. It is believed that everyone who died, their spirits lives there on that island. In the To'abaita language that island is called Anogwau, which literary means 'empty island' or the 'land of the dead peoples' spirits' known as 'Anoatha'. In the past and even today the people of Isabel and Malaita Islands still have some strong connections to that Island. There was no one on that island, except the spirits. Those who went fishing on that island often heard people talking but they are invisible. There were no flies on the island. After eating, fishermen left without cleaning the place. However, in the morning of the next day the beach was thoroughly cleaned and all the mess had gone. Someone had cleaned the place for them already, and you hardly seen a single leaf left on the beach. Once someone feels sick on the island, he lies on the beach and soon he feels better again. Yams, bread fruit tree, mango, papaya, ngali nut, betel-nut and coconuts are common on that island. But it is taboo to take it home. It sounds like a little paradise on earth to me when people told me about this Island. Later over the years, the name 'Ramos' was used more often by the local people than the original language name Anogwau. The name Ramos was first declared by the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana in excitement as they charted the island as *Isla de Ramos* on the 11th April 1568, meaning Palm Sunday in Spanish, because they saw the island on Palm Sunday (Wikipedia). This however does not deny the fact that 'Ramos' island is still Anogwau: A mysterious Island. Due to over fishing on the reefs over the years, fishermen have to go as far as Anogwau Island in search for reef fish. FAD is an alternative for fishermen to fish for pelagic fish other than depending on the reefs.

This chapter examines how the deployment of a fish aggregating device (FAD) influences gender relations in To'abaita, Solomon Islands. The chapter consists of the following sections; i) fish aggregating device, ii) fish aggregating devices in Solomon Islands, iii) fish aggregating device in To'abaita, iv) fish aggregating device deployment, v) positive and negative impacts of fish aggregating device, and vi) fish aggregating device and gender relations in To'abaita.

Here I argue that efforts to enable participation of women in FAD project do not have any significant impact on the project outcome and women empowerment. It however exacerbates existing power relations, and women's roles in household chores, especially gardening. However, the push for economic development in the rural areas have changed the traditional societies, including gender norms, roles, and expectations.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

For centuries fishers knew that fish are attracted to naturally floating objects such as logs or other debris. Fishermen also knew that fish can aggregate to any man-made objects that float in the ocean (Beverly, Griffiths and Lee 2012). Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) are man-made devices either floating or anchored to the sea floor to attract pelagic fish such as tuna (see figure 1).

“It is estimated that over 120,000 FADs are dropped into tropical waters every year, with most never recovered from the ocean” (KIRC 2018), most of these FADs are floating FADs used in the industrial fishing industry. This has raised concerned from environmentalists and advocates demanding a FAD-free environment. These issues led to governments and national fisheries agencies in the Asia region demand on understanding FADs holistically (Beverly, Griffiths and Lee 2012).

Anchored FADs become widespread in the Asia-Pacific region in the last two decades or so (ibid). Anchored FADs congregate fish at one location, which makes them easier to catch. Fishers do not have to search the ocean for signs of frigate birds, and to distant fishing grounds, reefs, and islets (Albert et al. 2012). Anchored FADs do not have the scale of environmental impact as floating industrial FADs (Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)). Whilst on one end floating FADs can be environmentally problematic, to most Pacific Island coastal communities, anchored FADs provide a relief from fish hunting in the ocean, reduce pressure on the reef ecosystem, and in the long run resilient to climate change and improved livelihoods (Albert et al. 2012). Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012:5) point out that FAD in the Pacific Islands, “[i]ncreased fishery production, reduced pressure on reef resources, import substitution, export creation, sports fishing opportunities, commercial development, cottage industry development, increased employment, reduced fuel consumption, safety at sea and maintaining an interest in fishing” (also see Sharp 2011).

Désurmon and Chapman (2004) confirmed that anchored FADs are universally successful in aggregating fish. The concerns are on how the communities and or users of these FADs could be responsible for looking after them. Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012) see the need for a holistic approach for FADs programs. They state,

A FAD programme must be approached in a holistic manner so that resource management and environmental, socio-economic and technical aspects are given proper consideration. Otherwise the FAD programme will be unsustainable and will result in financial and economic losses and possible negative impacts on aquatic resources and the marine environment in which they live (Beverly, Griffiths and Lee 2012:1).

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands Ocean contains some 1,019 fish species, including some 485 coral species, making it one of the most diverse coral reef systems in the world (Green et al. 2006; Sulu et al. 2012). Fish is one of the main sources of protein in the country. However, due to projected population increase the demand on coastal fisheries for subsistence consumption and commercial purposes, it is estimated that by 2030, the people of the Pacific Ocean, including the Solomon Islands, will face difficulty in obtaining food protein from fish (Bell et al. 2009). This will have devastating impacts on food security in the islands. This is evident in many rural fishing communities that depend on the marine resources for their daily sustenance who are experiencing less catch, declining fish sizes over the years, and reefs are becoming less productive. FADs are seen as a means to address food security and improved livelihoods including reduce pressure on fishing in the reefs in the Pacific Islands (Albert et al. 2014; Bell et al. 2009).

In Solomon Islands, the deployment of anchored nearshore FADs became an integral part of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources inshore strategy 2011–2013. To make this happen, a New Zealand-funded program called “Mekem Strong Solomon Island Fisheries” provided funds for WorldFish: an international research organization operates in Asia, Africa and the Pacific including Solomon Islands to harnesses the potential of fisheries and aquaculture to reduce hunger and poverty (Masu and Albert 2017), work collaboratively in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) to started a FAD programme known as “Developing a Solomon Islands National Inshore FAD Programme” in 2010–2013. FADs were deployed around the country under the program as a pilot project to learn from and see how effective the program will be carried out in the future. Gender inclusiveness was an important aspect of the FAD programs (Albert et al. 2012).

The pilot FAD project documented lessons learned and guidelines for future FAD developments. These were developed with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and now form the basis for the Solomon Islands national FAD programme. WorldFish, through collaborations and partnerships with the government and other stakeholders, implemented a project funded by Asian Development Bank (year to year): ‘Strengthening community-based natural resource management to safeguard food security in Malaita Province.’ Within the project eight (8) FADs were deployed in different locations within Malaita Province and the project team worked with communities near these locations from April to May 2018. My research focuses on understanding the gender dynamics of these FADs deployments in Solomon Islands.

In spite of the surveys that have, so far been conducted, the data available to measure the impacts of FADs on communities and at the national fisheries is still limited. Consequently, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and WorldFish recently in 2013 developed a monitoring system in Solomon Islands, which is linked to FADs database of the region (Albert, Beare and Andrew 2013). In 2014, Albert et al. (2014:1) note that, “FADs increased the supply of fish to four communities in Solomon Islands. Estimated total annual fish catch ranged from 4,300 to 12,000 kg across the study villages, with nearshore FADs contributing up to 45% of the catch.” However, the study also shows that,

While it is clear that FADs increased the supply of fish, FAD catch rates were not consistently higher than other fishing grounds. Villages with limited access to diverse or productive fishing grounds seemingly utilized FADs to better effect. Villagers believed FADs increased household income and nutrition, as well as providing a source of fish for community events. FADs were also perceived to increase intra-household conflict and reduce fishers’ participation in community activities. FADs need to be placed within a broader rural development context and treated as another component in the diversified livelihoods of rural people; as with other livelihood options they bring trade-offs and risks (Albert et al.2014:1). Also see Albert et al. 2015.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) in To’abaita

In 1994 Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF), facilitated by the Japanese Government in collaboration with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) deployed the first FADs at Silolo and Mbita’ama in To’abaita. The project aimed at promoting small-scale coastal fisheries in north Malaita as a pilot project. That project was different from the more recent FADs deployment by the MFMR and WorldFish. The OFCF project provided full support, including everything needed to set up a small-scale coastal

fisheries including a base in Auki, fisheries centers in Takwa and Malu'u, the establishment of fishing satellite communities, trainings on fishing methods, navigational skills, reef and fish species and other marine species identification and mapping of the seamounts, boat improvement, safety at sea, FADs installment and deployment, networking and marketing, management skills, and other facilities such as ice, boat, fishing equipment, transport, and so forth (OFCF 1995).

Since OFCF ceased in the late 2000 due to spillover effects of the 'tensions', there were no records of FADs in Malaita and probably Solomon Islands from the MFMR. This was the case until 2012 when other partners came in. Some communities in To'abaita continued to build and maintain their own FADs after OFCF ceased, crediting the OFCF project for the skills.

In 2015 the MFMR deployed a FAD in Mbita'ama, but it was lost during bad weather. In September 2017 the MFMR deployed another FAD at Fo'ondo. In April 2018 WorldFish, in collaboration with the MFMR and OKRONUS deployed near-shore FADs in Suafa bay and Afufu. The Afufu FAD was later reported lost due to strong currents. It was a huge loss in terms of time, resources, finance, and efforts put into deploying these FADs.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) Deployment in To'abaita

In the past two decades, many FADs were designed, built and deployed in the Pacific Islands region. Several FADs have been designed and tried in the Solomon Islands, with recommendations on design used being specific to site characteristics (Masu and Albert 2017).

The recently nearshore FADs designed and deployed by WorldFish and the MFMR in collaboration with OKRONUS are shown in the images below (Figure 2). In order to minimize the costs, these FADs were built with material available in Solomon Islands, including bamboos and white PVC pipes tied by rubber from tyre tubes and attached to a long polypropylene rope connected to an anchor. The anchor is made of a 200 liter drum cut into half; these halves are inserted with a tyre and steel rods filled with cements. The anchor is connected to a galvanized pipe filled with cement, inserted with steel rods as hocks to support the anchor from moving. In between the anchor and the floating devices are floats and attractants attached on the long rope. Below are pictures taken during FADs deployment in Afufu community by WorldFish in

collaboration with the MFMR and OKRONUS. The pictures illustrate the activities done during FAD deployments.

Figure 2: FADs installation and deployment in Afufu, To'abaita



FAD anchor is ready to be connected to a polypropylene rope before it is deployed in the ocean. The anchor is made up of a 200 l fuel drum cut in half, filled with cement.



FAD anchor is connected to the polypropylene rope



WorldFish officer and OKRONUS explain how to build the FAD floatation device



OKRONUS member explain how to connect the subsurface float



WorldFish officer explain how to join the subsurface floats to the ropes



Women, girls and children help holding the polypropylene rope



Children help separates the ropes use for attractants



Community members separate and attached the attractants on the polypropylene rope



OKRONUS member explain how to connect the ropes



Men dragged the anchor into the sea



The anchor is pulled by an OBM boat with support from men



Men swim with the anchor



The anchor is sank to the sea floor by WorldFish officers and OKRONUS members



FAD floatation device is carried behind the anchor



After the FAD is being deployed

Positive and negative impacts of FADs

FADs can be weighed in terms of its positive and negative impacts on family and the community wellbeing in rural Solomon Islands. Albert et al (2014) correctly highlights the positive and negative aspects of FADs in Solomon Islands villages associated with fishing for:

fundraising and feasts, income (fish sold at markets), improved nutrition (including responses of an increase in fish consumption), improved access to fish, improved food security, and other social dimensions such as building relationships and sharing fish with others. The 'negative aspects of FADs' categories included: creating arguments within the family and community, less support for household activities (particularly gardening but also childcare and firewood collection), reduced attendance at church, reduced community work (including general community, church and school related activities) and other problems, such as competition with other fishers, stealing canoes, and reluctance to share resources and knowledge (Albert et al. 2014: 8)

During the course of this study, first hand informants confirmed the positive and negative aspects of FADs on family and community explained below. Also see Sharp (2011) Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012), Albert et al (2012), Albert, Beare and Andrew (2013), Albert et al. (2014), Albert et al. (2015).

Benefits of FAD

Time Management

Fishers interviewed for this study have expressed that FAD becomes a fishing location for all coastal fishing communities to fish for pelagic fish. The nearshore FAD at To'obaita are easy to reach by dugout paddle canoes used by most artisanal fishers in the rural villages. Fishers would start to leave home around 4:00 Am and fish until first light. At around 8 am - 9 am they would start to leave the FADs and paddle back home. They arrive at home and involve in other household and community activities whilst waiting for the afternoon. At around 2pm fishers to go back fishing again around the FADs before sun set, which is another good time to fish. This means the FAD help reduces fishers search time for fishing in the reefs and ocean looking for sign of frigate birds or tuna which is time consuming, hard work, and risky during bad weather. The FAD allows fishers to manage their time with fishing and at the same time involve in other household and community activities (also see Sharp 2011; Beverly, Griffiths and Lee. 2012; Albert et al. 2012; Albert, Beare and Andrew 2013; Albert et al. 2014; Albert et al. 2015).

Income

According to the interviewees for the study they express that FADs helps generate daily income for families in the rural areas (also see Sharp 2011; Albert, Beare and Andrew 2013). Fish can be sold locally at local markets or in urban markets in Auki. Fishers can earn \$100 SBD - \$400 SBD or more daily. This helps reducing the everyday stress associated with lack of income to support the family in the rural areas. Fishing around these FADs earns more than gardening. The fast cash earned daily from FADs influences more men and boys to go fishing for their families. Fishermen confirm that fishing around the FAD is enjoyable, and once for the first time one catch fish at these FADs there is no turning back, the person become addicted to fishing, and would want to fish every day at the FAD. FADs also add values to other products, especially food sold at the local markets such as fish and chips, fish cakes, fish and baked cassava or desserts to earn profit. Money generated from FAD are spent mostly on food especially rice including other family needs such as school fees (also see Albert et al. 2012; Albert, Beare and Andrew 2013; Albert et al. 2014 and 2015).

Food

Those interviewed for the study confirmed that FADs help improve food security in rural families and community. Fish can be sold at the same time some are allocated for family consumption. Fish from FADs are sold by fishermen to non-fishers for food. In the rural fishing communities, fishers who depend entirely on fishing around the FAD rely on earnings they gain from fishing at these FADs to buy food for their family, especially rice which is readily available in the local shops or village canteens. Fishers also barter fish in return for local foods from farmers in the villages. In other words, FADs help alleviate the everyday stress regarding food and improve diet for the fishing families and communities in the rural villages. This is true according to Sharp (2011), Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012), Albert et al (2012), Albert, Beare and Andrew (2013), Albert et al (2014 and 2015).

Respondents have affirmed that the presence of fish in big gatherings and social events such as feasts, marriages, funerals, church anniversaries and other social events helps increase fish protein and improve the whole diet in such events. In the To'abaita culture food tells others about people's social status. For example in feasts or events that lack fish, pig (pork), baked ngalinut (Kata), taro, and yam, it degrades the status of the family, community and tribe. FAD helps families, communities and tribes to gain social status and values in social events. In other words, apart from food security, FADs add values to the social events and add status to the hosts (ibid).

Reduce pressure on fishing on the reefs

The interviewees for the study said that FAD allows fishers to move away from fishing on the reefs. FADs make it easier for fishermen to catch pelagic fish and other fish types compared to fishing at the reefs. The time spent fishing at the FAD is minimal compared to spending the whole day doing net fishing, diving, and other fishing techniques in the reefs. Fishermen affirmed that FADs makes them abandon their fishing net, and reef fishing to fishing at FADs. These are also highlighted in previous studies by Sharp (2011), Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012), Albert et al (2012), Albert, Beare and Andrew (2013), Albert et al (2014 and 2015).

Congregate fish

When fishers are asked about the benefit of FAD they often replied that FADs congregates fish into one location. This is an advantage for fishers to paddle directly to the FADs without

searching the ocean for fish (ibid). Fishers highlighted that FADs help them to get bait, which is hard to find. The baits are used by fishers targeting different fish species doing deep sea fishing and other fishing techniques especially for Swordfish (*Black marlin (Makaira indica)* and Indo-Pacific sailfish (*Istiophorus platypterus*). FAD shelters bait fish (katukatu) which they attracted tuna and other pelagic fish species.

Negative implications of FAD

Vandalism

It is highlighted by fishers who participate in this study that FADs has increase the supply of fish, and therefore reduce the price of fish. This means boat owners (OMB) will experience a loss in their fish market. People will go for fish at these FADs at lower prices, than OBM owners who fish in areas outside of these FADs who spent more on fuel, which means running at a loss (2000-5000 SBD/fishing trip). In these communities there are a few people who fish for pelagic species using OBM often at the offshore commercial FADs and running after tuna in the open ocean. These are commercial fishermen. These fishermen patrol the sea in search for pelagic fish at different locations. In some case, OBM owners have cut off FADs. This is said to be true according to Gwangosi that “boat owners from far places are suspected of cutting the FADs not those who own boats here” (Gwangosi, personal interview, August 3, 2018). Interviewees also alerted that vandalism may occur for other reasons such as claim of ownership, disagreements between fishers, and other personal grievances. Similarly Sharp (2011), Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012), and Albert et al (2015) also shared similar issues of vandalism.

Hard to adapt easily and social isolation

The individual interviewees pointed that in situation when the FAD is broken it left some fishing families in a disadvantage situation, especially those who stop from gardening during the course of the FADs. They find it hard to go back into gardening because their body no longer interested in working in the garden. Income and food becomes problematic for them in the absence of these FADs. This is a problem that fishing families in the rural areas need to be aware of when dealing with projects that are introduced by outsiders into the communities. Fishing family’s capacity to innovate and instigate changes becomes limited. They participate less in community programs, and social events such as marriages, funerals, feasts, and church anniversaries. This often leads to social isolation of family members. This has also been

highlighted in the previous studies on FADs in Solomon Islands (see Albert, Beare and Andrew 2013; Albert et al. 2014 and 2015).

Absenteeism from church devotions and community services

Community members interviewed for the study have confirmed that at the community level, fishers who get addicted in fishing at these FADs often miss out from church devotions in the morning and evenings. This is because the best time to fish at these FADs are early morning and before sun set. Fishers spent most of their time at sea around these FADs leaving only women at home attending most of the church programs and community works and meetings. This has also confirmed by Albert, Beare and Andrew (2013), and Albert et al. (2014 and 2015) studies on FADs in the Solomon Islands.

Risk and safety

Fishers interviewed for this study had shared similar experiences pointed out by Sharp (2011) and Beverly, Griffiths and Lee (2012). They said the common risks in fishing at these FADs are fishermen are at high risk of getting sick from cold or pneumonia from getting up early in the morning and spending most time at sea. Bad weather is also another risk which may lead to loss of lives. Risk in handling big fish at these FADs, it is important that fishers to alert everyone fishing at these FADs to help each other. Sharks' presence at these FADs are abundant, one always careful, especially when they saw shark attacks on fish they caught on their fishing lines. This is risky, especially if someone sunk at these FADs during such times. So far no report of shark attack on fishermen is reported during the course of the study.

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) and Gender Relations in To'abaita

Despite of some socio-economic surveys on FADs impacts on artisanal fishing communities, there is still lack of information regarding gender dynamics of these FADs in the local communities. As stated by Beverly, Don and Robert (2012:13) that "there is a risk that FAD programme organizers will overlook gender issues" (also see Albert et al. 2014, 2015). My research seeks to address this gap.

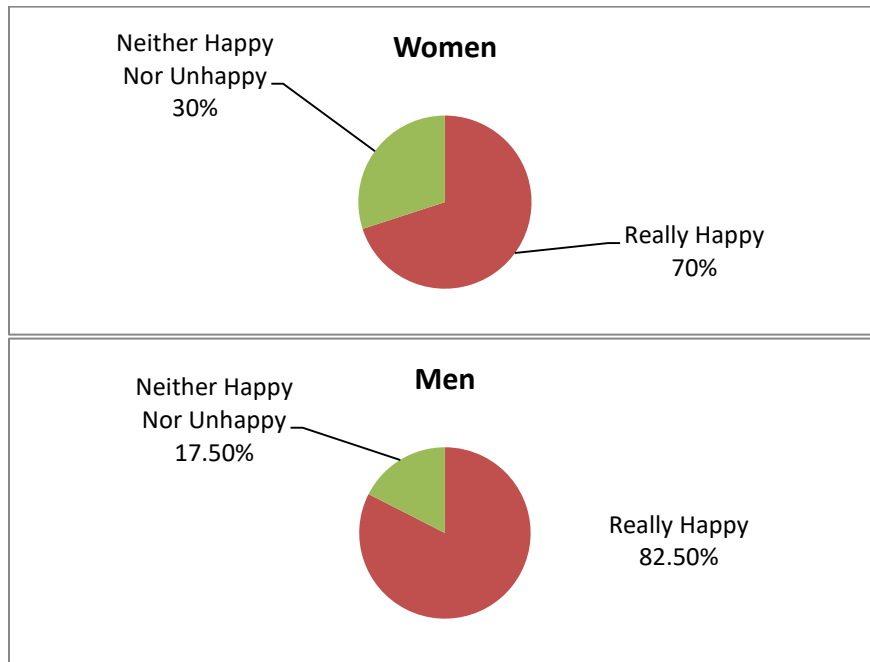
Nowadays, gender equality is viewed by many as an important aspect of social and economic development (El-Bushra 2000). It has been argued by Kabeer and Luisa (2013) that gender equality can be achieved through women participation in economic development projects

(also see Kabeer 2016; Meinzen et al. 2011a). In discussions of socio-economic development in places like Solomon Islands, many development partners, especially foreign organizations, often perceive rural communities as suffering from gender inequalities that are rooted in *kastom*, or local traditions (El-Bushra 2000; Kabeer and Luisa 2013; Gay 2009; Boutros-Ghali 1996). This attests that gender inequality is primordial and inherent in the traditions of Solomon Islands societies. Here, I argue that the push for women participation in economic development projects in the rural areas by development partners has not solved gender inequality. Instead, it reinforces household division of labor that creates new gender expectations that are compatible to the expectations of the donors or development partners. Consequently, when donors or development partners leave, the communities internalize the gender-based divisions of labor created by the development project. This could potentially create and perpetuate new kinds of gender inequalities. Here, I use the example of FADs in Solomon Islands to illustrate how development projects initiated and funded by development partners influence gender relations.

What do men and women think of these FADs?

Those interviewed for the study said that FAD puts smiles on the faces of both men and women in the local communities. FAD helps benefited the fishing families and communities. Nearly 80% of people interviewees confirmed that money earned from FADs are spent mostly on school fees and food, especially rice. Apart from school fees and food, FAD also helped them to contribute in marriage, funeral, and church activities. These benefits make both men and women express their happiness about the FADs initiatives in the rural areas. For fishermen, FADs makes it easier for them to catch pelagic fish, especially tuna and other fish species, which in return women said FADs helps alleviate the everyday stress of daily income and food for their family, especially school fees. For the non-fishing communities they are also happy for the abundant supply of fish at the local markets and inside the villages where they can buy easily. The question below is asked to see what women and men think of these FADs in their communities.

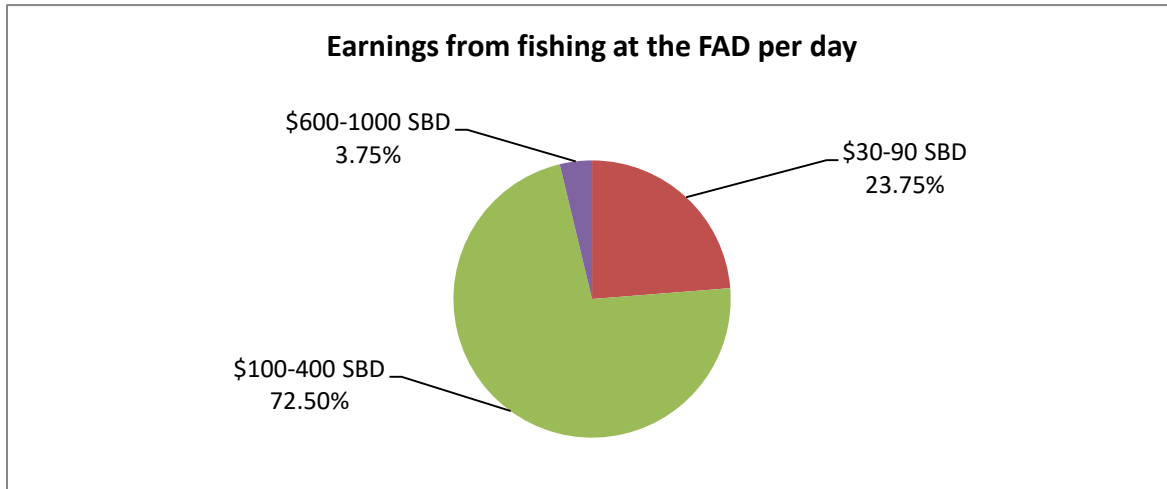
Figure 3: Are you happy about the FAD in your community?



A total of 80 interviews were conducted with 40 men and 40 women. From the total number of interviewees, 76.25% of them expressed that they are really happy about the FADs projects in their community, and 23.75% said they neither happy nor unhappy. For women interviewees, 70% of them said they really happy about the FADs compared to 82.5% of men interviewees. This indicates that both men and women are positive than being negative about these FADs in their communities.

More specifically, those who participate in the interviews for this study said that FADs generate fast cash on a daily basis compared to gardening. They said every day fishermen they earn cash for their family. The interviewees confirmed that they can earn \$200 SBD - \$600SBD or more on daily basis. This means by the end of a week, they can earn \$1,000 SBD - \$3,000 SBD or more, which is a huge contribution to peoples' incomes and livelihoods in the rural areas. The question that follows was asked in order to see how much the fishing families could earn from fishing at the FAD on a daily basis.

Figure 4: How much money does your family usually earned from fishing at the FAD per day?

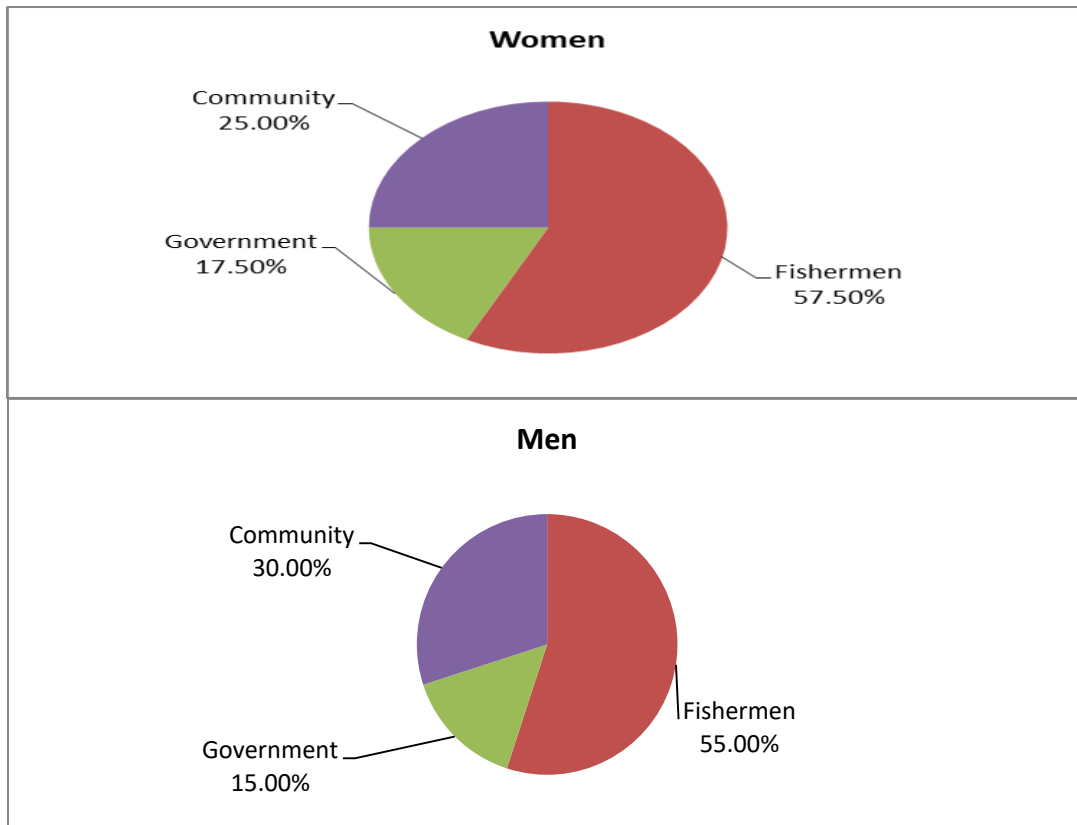


The chart shows that out of the total number of interviewees, 72.5% of respondents confirmed that daily they earned \$100 - \$400 SBD from fishing around FADs, whereas 23.75% said daily they can earn \$30 SBD - \$90 SBD, with only 3.75% with highest earnings per day. This is a huge benefit for the rural families and communities.

The question of community ownership remains challenging in the villages. When asked who owns these FADs, responses get from the interviewees varies. For most fishermen in the communities that FADs are implemented by themselves, it is clear that they are the owners. This is evident in Mbita'ama and Suidara communities in To'abaita.

Similarly, in communities that the FADs are implemented by the MFMR, the majority of fishermen confirmed that they own the project. However, others who took part in the interviews said that these FAD projects are owned by the government and organizations that facilitates these projects. Therefore they are responsible for maintenance and looking after the project. This is different from the FADs that are implemented by WorldFish and MFMR, as both men and women claimed that these FADs are owned by the community, and it opens to everybody. This implies both men and women are aware of the program.

Figure 5: Who owns the FAD in your community?



The pie chart above shows that nearly 60% of male and female interviewees claimed that FADs are owned by the fishermen, whereas 25% - 30% of interviewees said it belongs to the community, and remaining 15% - 17% respondents said it belongs to the government and donors. In other words, the chart shows that the majority of men and women whom are interviewed for the study perceive 'fishermen' as they were the owners of these FADs, meaning women lack sense of ownership over fishing/FADs in the communities.

What are the effects of FADs on women's roles in household chores in their families and rural communities?

When the interviewees are asked about what they think of women fishing at these FADs, most of them said that women should not fish around these FADs as it is culturally wrong for women and girls to leave their house to go out fishing amongst men who are predominantly fishers at the FADs. Others argue that it is not culturally wrong for women to fish around these FADs, the reason why people think they should not fish around these FADs are concerns regarding their safety. Some of the interviewees for this study said women in To'abaita are

scared of the sea that is why they did not go out fishing. Many women interviewees are saying that they can fish, but the decisions to fish around these FADs are predominantly made by their male counterparts with emphasis on kastom and safety purposes. This however does not mean that women are marginalized. What this means is the fact that in To'abaita culture men protects their women and girls. They make sure women's taboos are respected and maintained as well as they are safe and protected at all times. According to the interviews for this study, 80% of both men and women said women should not fish around these FADs because it is culturally wrong, while 20% said it is not culturally wrong, it is because of safety reasons. The association of fishing with men's roles and women's roles with household chores is often hard to change in the rural communities in Solomon Islands.

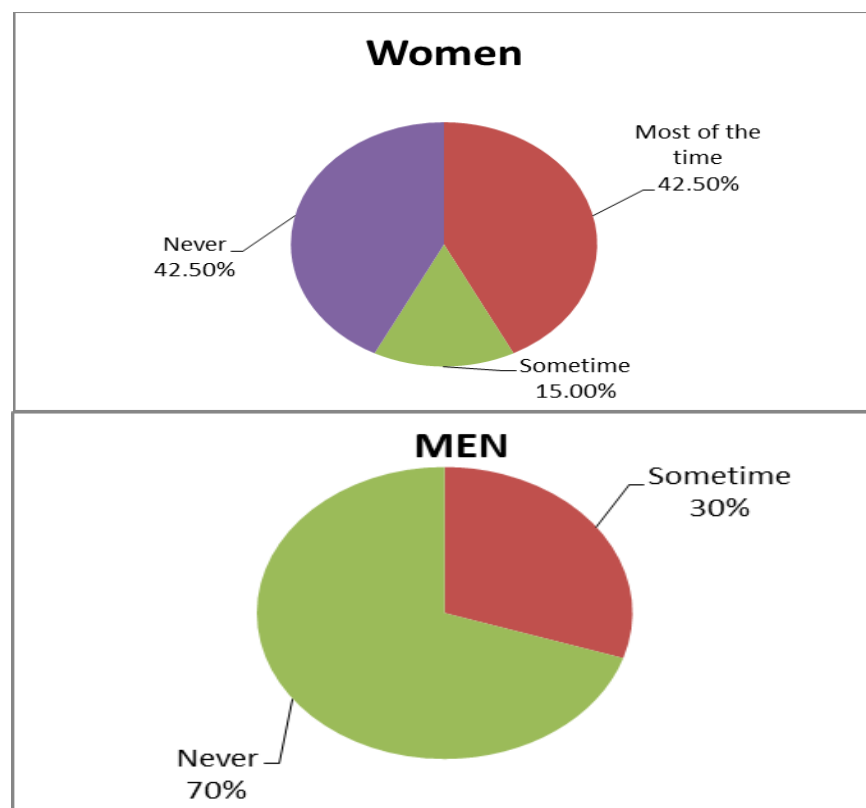
Fishing at these FADs are done mostly by men. Women on the other hand are responsible for taking care of the household chores including fish cleaning, preparation, selection, cooking and marketing. Women and children would go around selling fish in the village, or along the main road that serves the island. During market days, women carried the fish in dishes and in baskets to the nearby local markets in To'abaita namely Matakwalao/Gwaunasu'u, Silolo, Malu'u, Fulifo'oe/Ubere, Mbita'ama, Ofu, and Malanaofe. Some even end up in Auki, Malaita's provincial capital to sell their fish.

Due to no availability of electricity or ice, women would continuously bake the fish in traditional oven (motu) before it could be taken to the market. It is a hard work for women and girls, especially in getting the fish baked which includes collection of leafs, firewood, stones, fish parceling and preparation. Magali describes her role in fishing as follows,

I must cook some food for my husband before he goes out for fishing. I must refill his container water for drinking and put it inside his canoe. I must not say any bad word against him. I must not be angry while he is ready to go out for fishing. Be calm and willing to do what my husband says, be open-minded, and kind. When he arrives, my role is to wait for him, carry everything inside the canoe to the house, clean and prepare the fish for sell and food, and to make sure to cook some food for him to eat after he arrived. Be willing and happy about whatever catch, and say good things about the fish. Those are cultural beliefs associates with fishing. When I came here, my husband teaches me these beliefs, and I follow it every time he goes out fishing. If you do that, more fish will come meaning good luck in catching fish (Magali, personal interview, April 29, 2018).

Most of the individuals that took part in the interviewed for this study have highlighted that there is a clear division between men and women, where men do the fishing while women do the gardening. However, they said for some families women spent most of their time in the garden without any help from their men, and for other families they quit from gardening and concentrate only on these FADs. The question below explore how often men and women engaged in gardening in the presence of FADs.

Figure 6: How often did you go to the garden when the FAD was introduced in your community?



The pie chart shows that 42.5% of women interviewees confirmed that they engaged in gardening alone while their men went fishing. Similar percentage of women interviewees said they did not go to garden because they had to wait for their husband to arrive with the fish in order to prepare and sell them. Men on the other hand, 70% said they never go to the garden while only 30% of them confirmed going to the garden sometime. This indicates that FADs had increased some certain level of dependency in the rural areas, especially for the fishing communities. This dependency lack sustenance, especially when the FADs are broken.

For most women interviewees, they said that FAD had added extra burden to women's roles and responsibilities at home. They said that the probability for fishers to miss out from morning devotions, church activities, and community programs are high compared to women. They continue to say that most of the community works are undertaken by mostly women in the absence of their men. Mamula a woman interviewee said, "Since the FAD was deployed most men did not attend the church meetings/devolutions and other community programs" (Mamula, personal interview, April 28, 2018).

It is also confirmed by the interviewees for this research that some school boys after finishing school during the day, they would go out with other men for fishing around these FADs. In other words, FAD does influence young school boys. Similarly, they also highlighted in one of the communities that few people who work for the government such as teachers and nurse are attracted to these FADs which influence their service to the people in the communities. When asked about why they have to go out for fishing, they replied that FAD helps them to earn extra cash since their salaries are very small to sustain their families. Aifatara a female respondent said "I went to the clinic one time but the nurse was not there but he was at the FADs fishing" (Aifatara, personal interview, June 9, 2018). Halia another interviewee confirmed that during the day men hardly stayed at home or in the community, meaning these men often absence from most of the community works and activities during the day. She said, "You hardly see men in our village during the day, all went out fishing at the FAD. During community programs and activities women outnumbered men" (Halia, personal interview, June 8, 2018).

The respondents also reported that FADs does not increase domestic violence. However, they also pointed out that FADs did create some unfavorable situations within the family and community. They said that some of the fishermen after they acquire some cash from selling the fish, they tend to spend their money on *kwaso* (illegal home-brewed alcohol), which may lead to community disturbances and argument in the family. But it is very minimal in the communities according to those respondents. Only few men they did that. A female interviewee stated that her husband always drinks *kwaso* whenever he had money from the FAD and fishing in general. He would drink alcohol the whole weekend. Her family was not happy, especially when her husband got drunk; he would demand money and play loud music the whole night and day with other men and boys.

Some women interviewees said they think about complaining because their men did not help them with gardening but at the same time they see that their men are fishing to support their family. So they just keep quiet and work alone in the garden and at home. One of the interviewees said she has witnessed certain women when their husband did not catch any fish, they would disagree and told their husband to sleep outside or even throw their husband's fishing gears away. It becomes common jokes for men when they fish around these FADs: "*Moko de le'a ada moko biinga buira maa*" (fishing with tact in case you will sleep outside, meaning be able to catch fish in case your wife won't allow you to sleep inside the house/room) (Kefa, Personal interview, May 12, 2018). Another woman reported that she was threatened by her husband one time because she did not stop one of their younger sons from going to the FAD during a bad weather. She said,

One time I went to the FAD, I went behind one of my sons. He took his dad's canoe and go, and it was bad weather that time. My husband disagreed with me because I did not stop our son, but I told my husband that I did not know our son is going to the FAD. My husband told me that if our son didn't come back, he will kill me. I heard that, and I took another canoe and went behind our son hand-paddle in the rough sea 2 – 3 km from the shore. I went and took our son back from the FAD. When my son and I arrived everyone were waiting for us along the coast, they talked to my husband telling him not to do that next time, and they warned our children not to go out their own, especially during bad weather (Alia, personal interview, June 8, 2018).

Are women involved in the decision-making processes for implementing the FADs project?

With the FAD program, men are the contact persons at the community levels, and decision makers. They engaged in the FADs installation and deployment and the process it takes in implementing these FADs. Based on the interviewees, women only knew about these FADs through their male partners or fishermen but never participate actively in the process from implementing these FADs at the community level. Since men dominate fishing in To'abaita, women refer to fishing at these FADs as men's job. A woman interviewee said,

FAD is men's job. We women our work is to look after our family and household chores (cooking, cleaning, washing, collecting fire wood, fetching water, looking after the children, gardening, and marketing). We did not participate in FADs projects in the past because our common sense told us that it is men's job (Fa'athato, personal interview, August 3, 2018).

However, this is different for the FADs that are recently deployed by WorldFish and MFMR in 2018. The individual interviewees said that women are more likely to participate in

the current FADs program initiated by WorldFish and MFMR because WorldFish and MFMR and partner organizations encourage the participation of both men and women in FADs program. The interviewees pointed that women's involvement and participation in FADs program is new in To'abaita. Therefore it is challenging when projects such as these try to include women participation and involvement in the process it takes to implement these FADs. When those women who participate in the study are asked about if they ever participate in the implementation of these FADs, they confirmed that their participation is minimal. The question below was asked to see the degree of participation of both genders in FADs.

Did you ever participate in any discussion and decision in implementing FADs program in your community? Based on the interviewees, nearly 90% (87.5%) of women interviewees said they never involved in any discussion and decision in implementing FADs program. Only 12.5% of them confirmed their participation in the FADs program, especially with the current FADs that are supported by WorldFish and MFMR. However, their participation is mainly within the kitchen cooking foods for officers and participants who attend the program implementation.

Similarly, from observation, trying to get women involved in the FADs program still lack any significant impacts in the project outcomes. Women still hold on to their traditional spheres of influence within the family and community even they are encouraged by donors and organizations to participate in the program in the rural areas. A woman participant confirmed that she feels ashamed because she enters into men's job. She participates because the program prioritizes women involvement and empowerment through capacity building trainings which involves her in collecting data on fish catch from fishermen at these FADs. She said she had some experience of negative connotations from the community members, especially women saying that she supposed not to enter into men's domain or work traditionally belongs to men.

The interviewees continue to say that the decision to request a FAD, involvement in making the FAD/ receive information about the FADs is passed on through the male leaders who are primarily the decision makers at the family and community level. The perception that male are the household heads are true with the FADs programs in To'abaita according to the interviewees. The household decision-making are extended into the economic doim with regards to FADs for example. Women are excluded in the decision-making processes of implementing these FADs at the community and village level because fishing around these FADs is dominated by men. The general perspective that men do fishing while

women do gardening is true for FADs. Other interviewees highlighted that the nature of the project itself has determines women's involvement in the decision-making processes in project developments. Women themselves see FADs as men's job, distancing them away from close connection to these programs leaving it to men in control of the FAD activities. NGOs and government need to understand women's sphere of influence within these FADs, especially with market. Avenues that help facilitate markets in the rural areas needs to be explored and improved to empower women over fishing.

The fishermen associations are mostly made of men, therefore the inclusion of women in fishing committees are minimal, women who played certain leadership roles such as collecting data on fish catch from fishing at the FADs, attend training and participate during FADs deployment are examples of effort shown by international organizations in encouraging women to participate in economic development projects in the rural areas. However, even they are included and participated in these FADs program they remains the minority in decision-making and participation within the program. During installation and deployment of these FADs, men are at the front line in talking, facilitating and implementing these FADs projects, women on the other hand helped with cooking, food preparation, fetching water, and are the at the center of household chores. From the women interviewees they are saying that they are not marginalized as often depicted by outsiders. Cooking, food preparation, fetching water, taking care of the kids, fish cleaning, marketing, and being responsible for all household chores does not mean that they are marginalized or suppressed in society. What they are saying is that their roles and responsibilities are equally important to men's roles and responsibilities in society. Even in economic development projects, their roles and responsibilities in cooking, food preparation, fetching water, looking after the kids, gardening, marketing, and making sure people are fed and satisfied are important aspect of the society that cannot be ignored, especially in To'abaita society where both men and women depend on each other in their traditional roles and responsibilities.

At the household level, women make most of the decision on how much to cook, sell, and for how much. However most of the decisions on the prices and how much to cook are made collaboratively. Women do most of the marketing, moving around in the villages, along the road, and at the local markets. Sometimes during marketing, women may change the prices depending on the demand and supply of fish in the market. Other women confirmed that they have the ultimate decision on deciding which fish to cook for the family and which ones to sell for cash, where to sell and for how much, and decision over the cash earned.

For Magali, she said decision making in their family is more collaborative. The decision on which fish to sell is made collaboratively. Magali implies, "the two of us make decisions as to

which fish to sell and money gain from selling the fish. Sometimes my husband would make decision about the money. Sometime, I would make the decision. But most of our decisions are made collaboratively” (Magali, personal interview, April 29, 2018).

It is noted that decision making, and role and responsibility performances within the family is based on mutual understanding between husband and wife. For Menamena, she said, “I kept the money but my husband and I decide together on how to use the money” (Menamena, personal interview, August 5, 2018).

Most artisanal fishermen interviewees alluded that decisions over the cash are made collaboratively, they would get money for their smoke and fishing gear and the rest is left for the women to decide on how much to spent on food, and other basic needs inside the family. Some women interviewees confirmed that, men still have the overall decision when it comes to spending money on bigger things like marriage, funeral, church anniversaries, house construction, and school fees but it happen through collaborative discussions. This is the cultural norm in To’abaita. Most men confirmed that they did not keep the money they earned; they are not good at keeping money compared to women. Women kept the money and often when the need arise both men and women decide on how much to use based on mutual understanding and discussions.

The decision on when to go fishing is made mostly by men. Women sometimes influence men’s decision, especially on things regarding household activities example gardening. Since most men are fishers, fishing becomes part of their everyday life, therefore their women knew their everyday schedule, and should there be a need to quit fishing during the day for any reason, it has to be joint decision. FADs allow fishermen to manage their time spent fishing based on the best times to fish in the morning and afternoon. This allows fishermen to do other required activities within the house and community. Most respondents reported that it is no big deal; it is only the matter of planning between the husband and wife in how to manage their everyday activity within their family. Bale said,

It is how husband and wife talk together and manage their own family. I went fishing, my wife keeps the children. After our kids came back from school, my wife could go to the garden to collect food, and grow some while I look after the children. Sometime I came back from fishing, and then I went out to the garden while my wife keeps the children and house. It depends on our story together; sometime the two of us went gardening

together. However, I spent most time fishing compared to gardening. My wife spent most time gardening than me. Most times I went fishing, came back, keep the kids, and she sell the fish and buy rice for our family. She is the one responsible for keeping our earnings and buying of our foods and other family needs. My job is catching fish (Bale, personal interview, June 9, 2018).

Conclusion

According to those interviewed for this study, they state that FADs help alleviate the everyday stress of daily income and foods for the coastal fishing communities in To'abaita. It is clear that, not all families in To'abaita are farmers. Some are fishers. For families that are heavily dependent on fishing, FADs are a relief. Unfortunately, the FADs did not last as expected due to strong currents and bad weather or design. Villagers have limited capacity to maintain and replace the FADs once they are broken, which affects the sustainability of the project and the fishing communities. The government and development partners want the FADs maintained after the end of the project. However this is not always the case, and for the most part these projects end when the government and donors leave. The benefits that FADs contribute to peoples' wellbeing cease when these FADs are broken. This also affects donor and government involvement in FADs projects where its longevities are not certain.

Fishing around a FAD is different from everyday fishing without FADs. For FAD the best time to fish is in the early morning and before sunset. This means fishermen left home early before sunrise in order to meet the best times to fish in the mornings. FAD makes it easier for fishers to catch pelagic fish compared to fishing without FADs. Fishing without FAD does not require a specific time, and fish do not congregate in one place, so fishermen had to develop their skills about the sea and fishing methods in order to catch fish. Kefa a fisherman demonstrates his daily fishing routine as follows,

I would wake around 4am, and paddle to the FAD. When I reached the FAD it is exactly early morning before sun rise. I would fish until 10am, then would come back to sell my first catch in the morning. My wife always come waiting for me along the shore. She would bring me food and water. After eating I went back fishing again and my wife would take care of our market. My wife is always there waiting, she would sell our catch, and make sure I have food and water. I would go back and fish three times a day. My wife would put aside fish for our family, and she would make sure we did not run out of food, especially rice. Back at home the two of us would see how much we earn that day. Sometime we earn nearly thousand dollar a day. Decision on the money earned is made collaboratively; my wife and I talked together about the uses of our money. We kept our

money in one basket; the two of us knew how much is in our basket. We always consult one another on how to use our money (Kefa, personal interview, May 12, 2018)

Women feel motivated to support their men, especially with household activities when they see their men are working hard to support their families at the rural villages. They do all they can to support their men, especially with food making sure their men have to eat well before they go out fishing, refilled their water bottles and put them inside their canoes, and when they return their women took care of the fish for consumption and market. At home women take care of the household chores including, cooking, cleaning, washing, feeding the kids, and other household activities. FADs also strengthened women's capacities in marketing. This is where women already have some substantial power over. Women also make decision on how much to sell and how much for household consumption. They also oversee their household needs, especially food and school fees.

In situations when these FAD are broken, artisanal fishers find it hard to earn income to support their families, especially for families that depend entirely on these FADs for their family sustenance. Families become miserable, experience lack of income, food shortages, social isolation from the larger community, and failure in paying for their children's education. Mamalita confirmed, "When the FAD is broken, it really affects our lives, I find it hard to earn money, and as a result all my children had to leave school. I could not able to afford their school fees. It really affects our family" (Mamalita, personal interview, May 16, 2018).

For some, FAD replaces gardening; meaning both husband and wife stop gardening and focus only on fishing at these FADs. In other words, FAD is the only means of income and food for their family. Therefore when the FAD is broken, it hits hard on them, especially in getting back to gardening. Bola expressed when the FAD is broken, "We become starved and we had to start new again, our body was no longer interested in gardening, it took some time before we could adapt back to gardening again. For us, our interest is fishing compared to gardening" (Bola, personal interview, May 28, 2018).

FAD also helps families to venture into other domains to improve their livelihoods within the rural areas. It also strengthened social relationships with others. Ulafu reveals when the FAD is available,

We also run a piggery, so I earn money from these FADs and put aside money for school fees, and for pig feed, food, and other family needs. The FAD gives us good life; nothing is hard, because we have money. During the time of the FAD, I contribute almost in all occasions around us including marriages, funerals, feasts, and church anniversaries. It makes our family feels good. My wife and children feels happy and confident; they can interact with other family members, but this time, we cannot do much (Ulafu, personal interview, May 18, 2018).

FADs help with the supply of fish to coastal and inland communities. It helps improve diets inside the family and communities, especially during big gatherings and ceremonies (church anniversaries, marriages, funerals and other big occasions). An interviewee said “Today most diet during the big occasions includes mainly rice, pork, and chicken” (Gwathasu, personal interview, May 28, 2018).

FADs is seen as an alternative not only for fishers to shift from everyday fishing on the reefs, but also as a means of getting men and boys occupied other than going to town in search of opportunities, and involving in illegal activities. FADs provide opportunities in the villages. Rido affirms, “FAD keeps men and boys occupied. It prevents them from going to town. Most of the village young people go to town in search of something to support them, ended up doing illegal activities” (Rido, personal interview, July 24, 2018).

FAD for example as an economic development project shows that there is both negative and positive impacts and relationships created by economic development projects in relation to gender in the rural areas in Solomon Islands.

The next chapter concludes the thesis on how economic development projects, and more specifically installation of fish aggregating devices (FADs) influenced gender relations in Solomon Islands, and how existing patterns of gender relations shaped or limited the effects of development project in Solomon Islands.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter discusses how economic development influences gender relations in Solomon Islands, and how existing gender patterns influences development processes and outcomes. It uses the fish aggregating device (FADs) in To'abaita as a project through which to examine gender issues in economic development.

This chapter provides: i) key findings; ii) implications; and, iii) recommendations.

Key findings: Lessons from FAD in To'abaita

This study provides some important lessons about gender and development for government and development partners, especially international non-government organizations (NGOs) that promote gender equality and equity in the rural areas in Solomon Islands. In traditional To'abaita society, gender roles and responsibilities are standard and fixed, or clearly defined. Men and women know their roles and responsibilities. These traditional gender roles and responsibilities are often difficult to change, even for development agencies such as international NGOs that have substantial leverage because of their sponsorship of economic development projects.

However, the process of economic development and the changes that it engenders has often transformed traditional societies in ways that usually creates complex changes, confusing expectations and gender inequalities. This study reveals how some aspects of culture are resistant to the western discourses about gender because it is viewed as a foreign concept. It also shows that certain aspects of kastom are conducive to and can be used to promote positive economic development in To'abaita.

In Solomon Islands languages there are no words that could be translated to the English word 'gender'. Consequently, when Solomon Islanders use the term 'gender', they are referring to 'sex' or the biological features that categorize 'woman' and 'man' or male and female. This means that they see female and male as biologically different and therefore not equal. As a result, when development agencies talk about gender equality, people in the villages perceive it as a challenge to their kastom. They therefore intuitively resist it. This is the perception that most To'abaita people have when they hear the terms 'gender equality' and 'women's rights.'

Consequently, the rural communities, especially men who are the household heads, are often resistant to these ideas.

The study found that people in contemporary To'abaita society have little understanding about the traditional gender norms, roles and expectations. Consequently, in To'abaita nowadays, men tend to perform tasks and responsibilities that traditionally belonged to women and vice versa, women do men's job. These shifts in gender roles is often ridiculed by the community members, especially for women doing men's job or taking men's position as household heads and vice-versa men doing women's roles.

In To'abaita kastom, women are the most respected and powerful people. They are so respected that, for example, when obscene language is directed towards women and girls, it could result in the demand of compensation, or raid of the offending party by male relatives of the woman or girl. A woman can destroy a man, a *ramo* (warrior), or a *wane ni fo'a* (priest) by doing things like defiling his food, water, pigs, garden, prayer, and everything that keeps the family and society intact. Nowadays, that respect and fear for woman no longer exists as To'abaita society continues to change. This lack of fear and respect for women and girls has contributed to their marginalization in contemporary society.

In To'abaita, women are referred to as *kwatona tooa* (mainstay of the house). They control all the aspects of household chores from cooking, washing, cleaning, gardening, nurturing etc. They are the ones who keep the family in place. Men on the other hand are referred to as *gwauna tooa* (head of the house), especially in leadership and decision-making and the protection of the family. However, the roles and responsibilities played by the different genders are complementary – they support each other in sustaining society. It is a mutually beneficial relationship between both men and women in the family and communities in To'abaita. Nowadays, that complementary relationship that defines and supports each gender's roles is often misinterpreted as male dominance and wanting to be the 'boss'. This is where the issue of gender inequality and women's suppression becomes real, as it makes most men express masculinity through the concept of *wane - wane ni bona'a, kin- kini ni bona'a* (man will always be man and woman will always be woman).

The study of FADs has illustrated that regardless of the many changes, some aspects of kastom are difficult to change, especially with the concept of *wane na gwauna tooa* (man is the head of the house) in decision-making, leadership and protector of the family. On the other hand, *kini na kwatona tooa* (woman the mainstay of the house) are the anchor of the household, taking care of household chores. As society changes, these changing relations of power were exacerbated within and beyond homes. Organizations working in Solomon Islands often find it hard to change this power relation. This however does not deny the fact that economic development projects enable changes to gender norms, roles and expectations in the rural areas of Solomon Islands. These changes bring both negative and positive consequences on both genders.

The study of FADs shows that both men and women are happy about FAD program in their communities. Seventy percent (70%) of women who were interviewed during this study said that they were happy about the FADs. This compares to 82.5% of men who stated that they were happy with FAD. This means that most men and women were happy with and benefited from the establishment of FADs in their communities

In the FAD project men are at the frontline in decision-making and participation in fishing. Their female counterparts do the cooking, washing, cleaning, gardening and marketing. The concept that man is the head and woman is the mainstay of the society was strengthened and reproduced in the FAD project. Often international organizations see this power relation between men and women as discriminatory against women's rights to participation in leadership and decision-making processes in economic development projects. However, in traditional To'abaita society, what is important is the mutual support and relationships between both genders in the roles they play in the society. They often maintained this power relation in order to keep their family and community intact. The elderly women interviewees refer to kastom and tradition as *do inoto*, meaning 'very precious.' It makes men and women honour each other with great respect and mutual support in whatever roles they played in the society.

The study also reveals that FAD has altered household divisions of labour by affecting the way men and women allocate time between different traditional roles, but have if anything reinforced existing traditional gender roles within the family, and community. At the same time, they have often increased the burden on women by providing more opportunities for men to

pursue their traditional dominant roles while neglecting work in their traditional shared roles. Women often suffered from the negative consequences of the uneven changes that took place within the household division of labour and community compared to their male partners. In particular, men spent more times fishing while women doing all the household work, especially gardening alone. The data showed that nearly 43% of women interviewees said they engaged in gardening alone without their men. Similarly, at the community level, men's presence in community works and programs was limited. This means women tend to take up most of the roles and responsibilities in the community in the absence of their men.

About 80% of the women interviewed for this study said that they never stopped their men from fishing at the FADs even when the men were not performing their gardening and household tasks and responsibilities, or helping women. The study showed that women supported their husbands who engaged in fishing to support their family. They made sure they prepared food and water for their men and put them in their canoes before they left for fishing at the FADs. When their men returned from their fishing trips, women prepared food and water for them before they took care of the fish for sale and for family meals. This is a reflection of how powerful traditional gender norms, roles and expectations were reproduced in economic development projects in the rural areas.

Families that were heavily dependent on FADs for their daily sustenance often faced hardships when the FADs were broken. It is often difficult for them to adapt and return to gardening, especially for those who have stopped working in their food gardens. The study shows that 42.5% of women interviewees said they stopped from working in the garden because they had to wait for their husbands in order to prepare and cook the fish for sale at the local markets.

The study also illustrated that if men were engaged in activities that helped benefit their families, women tended to accept their roles and responsibilities, especially gardening alone. Being occupied and supportive of the family was the most important responsibilities of both genders in traditional To'abaita society. As long as men and women fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the family and community, and are supportive of each other, women's participation in economic development will continue to persist in spite of difficulty or opposition.

In the communities covered in this study, there were different perspectives about who owns the FAD projects. For example, 58% of women who were interviewed said that the FAD belonged to the fishermen. This implies that women did not identify with the fishing aspect of the FAD projects. This illustrates that men and women's views on the ownership of economic development projects may influence how they participate in and benefit from the FAD project. This may reflect the traditional gender roles and responsibilities as defined by kastom.

The study of FADs also indicates that the nature of the economic development project itself also determines how men and women participate in decision-making and leadership roles in implementing the projects in rural communities. For example, fishing and the maintenance of FADs were associated with male jobs in traditional To'abaita society, thus limiting women's participation regardless of the push by donors and NGOs for women to participate in these roles. This is because traditionally in To'abaita fishing were mostly done by men while women do the gardening, fish gleaning, marketing, and household chores. Community members therefore often mobilized themselves based on their traditional gender norms, roles and responsibilities in economic development activities. In other words, FAD projects taken in isolation strengthened the roles of men in fishing and women's roles in gardening and marketing.

The study also illustrates that economic development projects have raised expectations from both genders in the rural communities. Women and men see outside organizations and donors as funders who are in possession of money to help develop the local communities where economic developments are limited. Often, in order to obtain funds, both men and women respond by following what the funders and implementers expect from them. For example, the push for women participation in economic development in the rural areas. However, to change the traditional perspectives of gender roles and responsibilities, especially in areas of fisheries is often very challenging, and organizations find it hard to redefine gender in economic development initiatives in the rural areas in To'abaita.

It is clear that any activity that can generate income in the rural areas is more likely to influence gender and household division of labour within families and communities. Families have changed their daily schedules, roles and responsibilities in order to participate in income

generating activities. These changes have both negative and positive consequences on communities and families.

Implications for literature

Often western discourses of gender have portrayed kastom and traditional societies as the root cause of gender inequality and women's suppression. Consequently, it is often argued that in order to achieve gender equality and women empowerment, kastom and traditional societies must change. This study of FADs proves that changes to kastom and traditional societies does not guarantee gender equality and the empowerment of women. It could however create new and unequal gender norms, roles and expectations, where women and girls often suffer the negative consequences of these changes compared to their male folks.

In addressing this issue of gender inequality and women disempowerment, government and international organizations have included and involved in discussions about gender in economic development. These for example include discussion on gender sensitive approaches in economic development such as 'women economic empowerment' or 'women in development' approaches and gender transformative approaches or 'gender and development' approaches (Lawless et al. 2017; Momsen 2004; El-Bushra 2000; Moser 1993).

Although 'women economic empowerment' approaches or 'women in development' approaches are questioned for not addressing the root cause of gender inequalities (El-Bushra 2000), the study of FAD has proved that in the rural areas it is much easier to empower women using their traditional roles and responsibilities than trying to change what is traditionally perceived to be women and men's roles and responsibilities. Empowering women and men in their traditional roles and responsibilities in economic development projects allows both to work collaboratively in the development of their family and communities leading to more empowerment for women and as well as men in the long run. The more women and men are empowered in their traditional areas of influence, especially in the rural areas where kastom is still practice, it did not disrupts gender relations and society as intentionally but it gives more power to men and women to venture into other works of life and development aspirations that can changes, transform and improves the livelihoods of their families and communities and as well as their relationships with others.

The study of FADs has pointed out that many of the limitations that were faced by WorldFish and other organizations that try to use FAD to change relationships between men and women had to do with the definition of gender roles in traditional To'abaita culture. In particular, the association of fishing with the male role and marketing or gardening with the female role has been very powerful, and limited the ability of funding agencies to use FADs to change the power relation between men and women in To'abaita society. Furthermore, it has been very difficult to modify existing ideas about gender roles without seeming to attack To'abaita culture. However, there are some aspects of traditional culture that allow for women to hold substantial power, and this study indicates that greater success in empowerment of women will arise if future projects focus on the role of women in marketing. This is one area where women already have some power, and where they could be given even more power without attacking existing gender roles in a significant way as giving women decision-making power over fishing.

The study indicates that when international organizations attempted to empower women by having them take on men's traditional roles (e.g. fishing), they encountered resistance and implementation was slow and ineffective. But when organizations providing women with more power in areas related to their traditional roles such as marketing of fish; it both empower women and promote local development more effectively. However, when men and women are empowered in their traditional spheres of influences, there is no doubt that it will still change the existing traditional gender norms, roles, and expectations and structures in the future, but it takes time before such changes could happen. By empowering both men and women with resources and information associates with their traditional roles and responsibilities in fishing and marketing, both men and women will contribute equally to their family, community, and local developments more effectively.

The study of FADs illustrated that the power relations between men and women within the families in To'abaita have been very powerful, and in some ways unintentionally reproduced and strengthened by economic development projects, particularly when they have focused on areas where males already possessed power according to traditional gender norms. This has challenged development policies for women empowerment, gender equality, and gender

sensitive approaches in economic development initiatives in the local communities. It is therefore important that international organizations focus on the empowerment of both men and women's traditional roles and responsibilities not in isolation but in relation to each other. The aim is to improve rural lives, especially market, income, water and sanitation, education, health etc. Economic developments that improve the livelihoods of the rural poor, will definitely lead to changes in gender norms, roles, and expectations. However, the need to understand these changes is important in order to mitigate the negative consequences of these changes, especially on women and girls in the rural areas in Solomon Islands.

Recommendations

1. FADs need to be integrated in a comprehensive fisheries program: Many respondents in To'abaita refer to OFCF approach in the 1990s as being very effective. OFCF used FADs not only as a means to catch pelagic fish but is intended also for supplying bait fish for fishers to accelerate their fishing activities. OFCF set up an office in Takwa and Malu'u in north Malaita with the rural people. The communities are organized into fishing satellite groups promoting community ownership of the whole process. FADs played a crucial role in the whole fishing operation. As one of the interviewees recommends,

For fisheries or Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) who are interested in fisheries to provide trainings for fishermen as done by OFCF, to make sure FADs for example are not the only means for fishing. FADs should help fishermen to promote their fishing techniques, and skills in fishing. If fishers are knowledgeable about the sea (fishing grounds, fish species, how to catch them, when, and where), fishermen will not depend on these FADs. That is why when there is no tuna at these FADs; fishermen find it hard to catch fish because they lack knowledge to fish for other fish species. I see these FADs also narrowed our knowledge of fishing to focus only on these FADs. The moment these FADs are gone, fishermen will be affected because they depend entirely on FADs for fishing (Di'adi'a, personal interview, April 29, 2018).

2. Improve fish processing, particularly the cold chain: Within the rural area cash flow is very low, therefore the need to link market for fishermen is very important. Market is the main problem for rural fishers. They fish every day but due to less flow of income, most time fish are baked in traditional oven trying to be preserved for days, but no one pays them, so ended up in family meals before it goes bad. The need for a storage site such as ice would improve fishing in the rural areas. The fisheries division and partners need to focus on fisheries projects that will

push the economy of the communities in the rural areas. Also lack of these facilities has exacerbates women's roles in marketing. An interviewee states,

We need ice (storage site) to store and preserve fish for market. Example a storage site is established here in Mbita'ama, the agent will buy fish from all fishermen from Afufu to Fo'ondo and beyond. The agent (fisheries or local owner) will sell the fish to the provincial head quarter and the main city Honiara, and beyond. Fishermen will also purchase ice to preserve their fish and transport their catch to sell in town. The most important thing for fisheries and partners is to help facilitate and build networks with potential buyers linking markets with local fishers and buyers to help build the economy of the rural communities (Mamula, personal interview, April 28, 2018).

3. Integrated local knowledge in the design of the FADs: it is important to listen to local fishermen's advices. They know better about the sea, the current, and so forth. Incorporating local fishermen knowledge about the sea is important in building these FADs. Those men I have interviewed mentioned that the anchor/hock need to be strengthened, the steel rod is too small and very easy to break due to salt water. The rope that connect to the floating device also needs to be extended a bit above sea level to avoid sinking at one go (also see Albert et.al.2015). A fisherman who spent most of his time fishing for his family shared his experience saying,

I am a great fishermen, I fish every day for my family. My work is fishing. I fish with my dad since I was a kid and I'm still fishing today. I know about our sea and the current because I feel it every day. Our FAD lasts not even a month due to strong current. The need for local fishers to share their knowledge and integrate it with the FAD designed structure implement by outsiders needs to be considered in future FAD programs in the communities (Thakwa, personal interview, August 3, 2018).

4. Raise awareness on the impacts of FADs: The need to aware community members of the likely effects of depending entirely on FADs is important for family sustenance. This comes back to time management and daily dialogue within the family between husband and wife. Often women suffered most from the negative consequences of these developments compared to men in the rural areas. NGOs and government need to approach FADs holistically, which means fisheries and agriculture must work together especially in the rural communities. Albert et.al (2014:7) said that "community awareness can promote effective use of FADs and negate losses." Communities need to be aware about the possible negative impacts of these FADs and how to mitigate these impacts before FAD deployment in the communities (Albert et.al.2014). Bobobo affirmed that daily dialogue is important. She said,

At the family level our plan for the next day is discussed during the night, and we know what we will do on the next day. I would wake up at 5 am, cook food for my family, and make them ready for school, and then I went to work in our garden, while my husband went fishing. During the night my husband wakes up to make different kinds of bait. I must wake up with him and help with preparing those baits, at the same time discuss about our plans for tomorrow. Every day dialogue is very important. At the community level awareness on the impacts of these FADs on families and communities is important to keep everyone informed in order to minimize FADs' unfavorable impacts (Bobobo, personal interview, May 6, 2018).

5. Distribute FADs fairly amongst communities: Others who see FADs skipped their communities feels neglected and ignored because they did not know how to get assistance from the donors and the MFMR. While they struggled on their own, and others get help from outside is seen unfair. To ensure equity amongst communities government and NGOs who are interested in fisheries need to go down to the communities to find out about the distance from one FAD to another, fishing population for the catchment area and the demand for fish within that area, fishermen associations/structures, including right contact persons especially those who actively engaged in fishing and community works. Kefa raised his concern regarding FADs distribution in the rural areas. He mentions,

Because we did not have any FAD, fish that are sold by members who had FADs in their communities are sold at higher prices here. If we had our own FAD fish will be cheaper and our families will benefit similar to the other communities with the funded FAD programs. They are lucky to have these FADs, while we here missed out from these projects. It is recommended that fisheries organizations to distribute FADs fairly in the rural areas (Kefa, personal interview, May 16, 2018).

6. Set up fishing associations to maintain FADs: In Suidara and Mbita'ama catchment area in To'abaita people worked together. It is important not to dismantle the ways people make things happen on their own. What is important is to learn from them and allow them to take ownership even without the presence of the donors and funders. An interviewee gives an example of certain communities who maintains their FADs even without the help of donors. He points, "People in Suidara and Mbita'ama they work together that is why they maintain their rafters (FADs). Here people do not work together; people are brain washed by funded projects from outsiders" (Ulafu, personal interview, May 18, 2018).

7. Provide trainings on fishing methods: The provincial and national government need to work together with the rural communities especially fishermen to build a vibrant community based marine resources in Solomon Islands. The need for provincial and national government to maintain these FADs with the communities are important, in other words to provide trainings integrate both traditional and scientific knowledge in fishing not only around the FAD. The provincial and national government and partner organizations to revive the trainings on fishing methods and skills, deep sea fishing, reef locations, seasonal calendar for fishing, safety at sea, and so forth. This means more time is needed in training and practice. During the OFCF project, training alone takes five years of practice, before commercializing, and marketing (also see OFCF 1995; Albert et.al.2014).

8. Empower women and men in where they already have some power over: The need to realize the nature of the economic development projects in the communities and be able to identify where in the development programs facilitated by international organizations women are actively engaged are important in making sure that both men and women are empowered where they already have some substantial powers over, other than attacking existing gender patterns and relations with resistance from the society members. It is recommended that avenues for markets are provided for women in order to connect them close to these FADs. Lack of proper market facilities in the rural areas puts more pressure on women's roles and responsibilities at home. A female interviewee recommends, "Women do the marketing while men do the fishing. A business operated structure that makes women as active participants in the fisheries chain at the rural areas" (Maua, personal interview, April 28, 2018).

9. Cultivate traditional knowledge: Government institutions and international organizations need to re-examine and cultivate traditional knowledge with the help of the local community members in order to communicate gender effectively in the rural areas. Without understanding kastom and tradition of a particular place, international organizations cannot carry out work effectively in the rural areas. Some aspect of custom and tradition that recognized the substantial power of women needs to be promoted, especially respect for both genders, and finally being able to understand changes is important in order to mitigate its negative consequences, especially on women and girls in contemporary Solomon Islands societies.

10. *Promote kwaifa'amanataia (talk-story approach)*: Since the society is now very complex, International organizations including local community members and individual families need to promote traditional practices of *kwaifa'amanataia* (talk-story approach). Example *kwaifa'amanataia* (talk-story approach) promoting *birangana wele'e hai, wele'e wane, gwauli'i hai ma gwauli'i wane* (what it means to be good girls and boys and men and women), *u'unua i bi'u* (boy's only stories), *u'unua i luma* (women and girls stories only), *sule lana tooa ma tafo lana tooa* (how to raise a family), *sulagwaua* (history), *talisibaraa* (geneology), *too le'a la* (good life), *manata baita la* (respect), *liothaua* (love), *abua* (women and men's taboos), *taraa* (how to live longer) etc. It is these stories that have set the basis of human interactions in To'abaita and keeps families and communities intact and in harmony. Today these stories are missing in most families, communities, and homes.

Kastom and tradition are not necessarily the roots of gender inequality and women's suppression. Rather, gender inequality, women suppression and violence against women are products of the process of change which creates new and unequal gender expectations and relationships, a lineal transition that reflects the trajectories of modernization. This is a process of complex intersection between traditional and modern changes that have resulted in the deterioration of mutual gender responsibilities that were characteristic of traditional To'abaita society in Solomon Islands. The giving away of kastom does not guaranteed gender equality and women empowerment, it was however creates and recreates complex gender issues and inequalities in contemporary societies.

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